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# THE COMMUNITY THEATRE

LOUISE BURLEIGH

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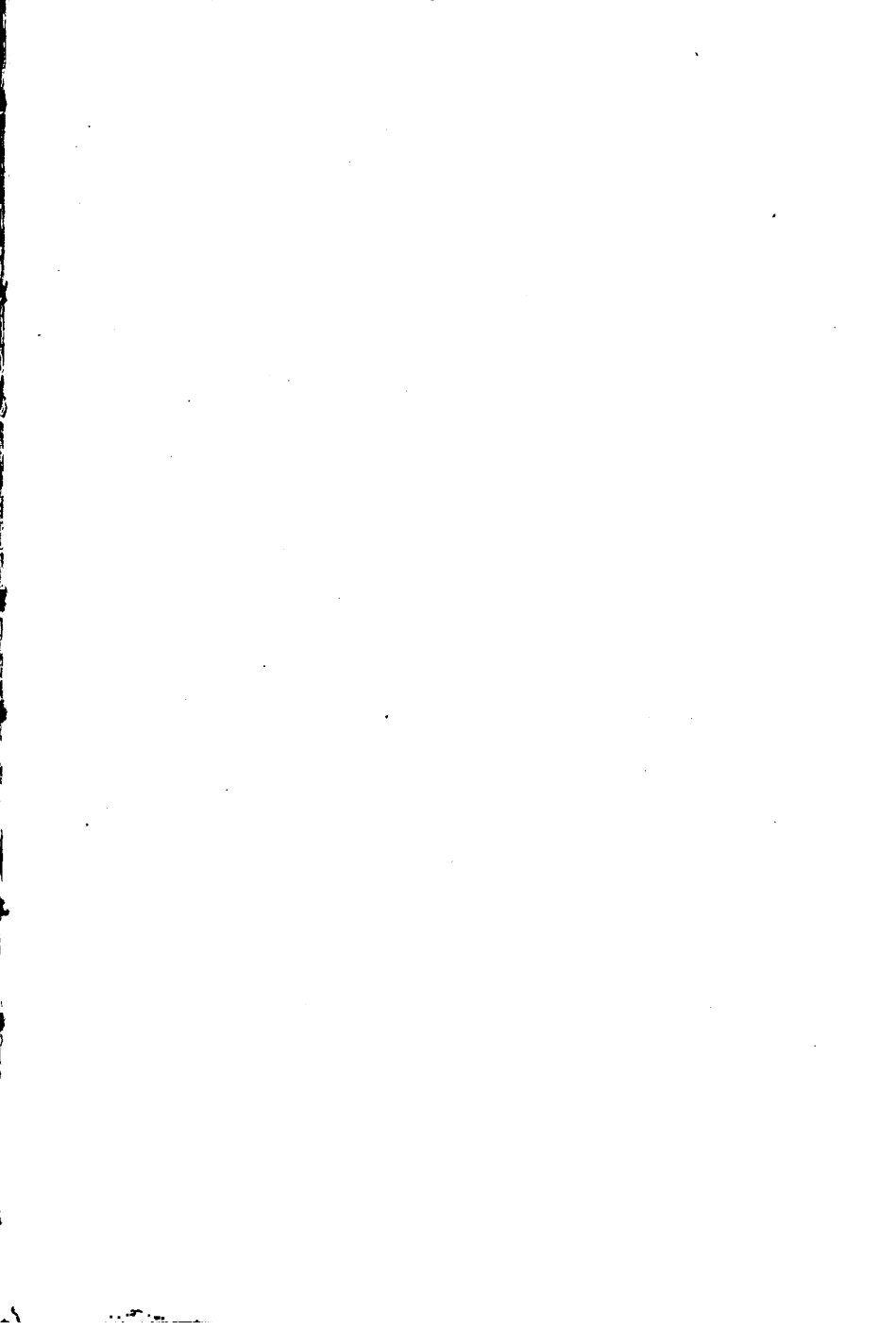
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# **THE COMMUNITY THEATRE**









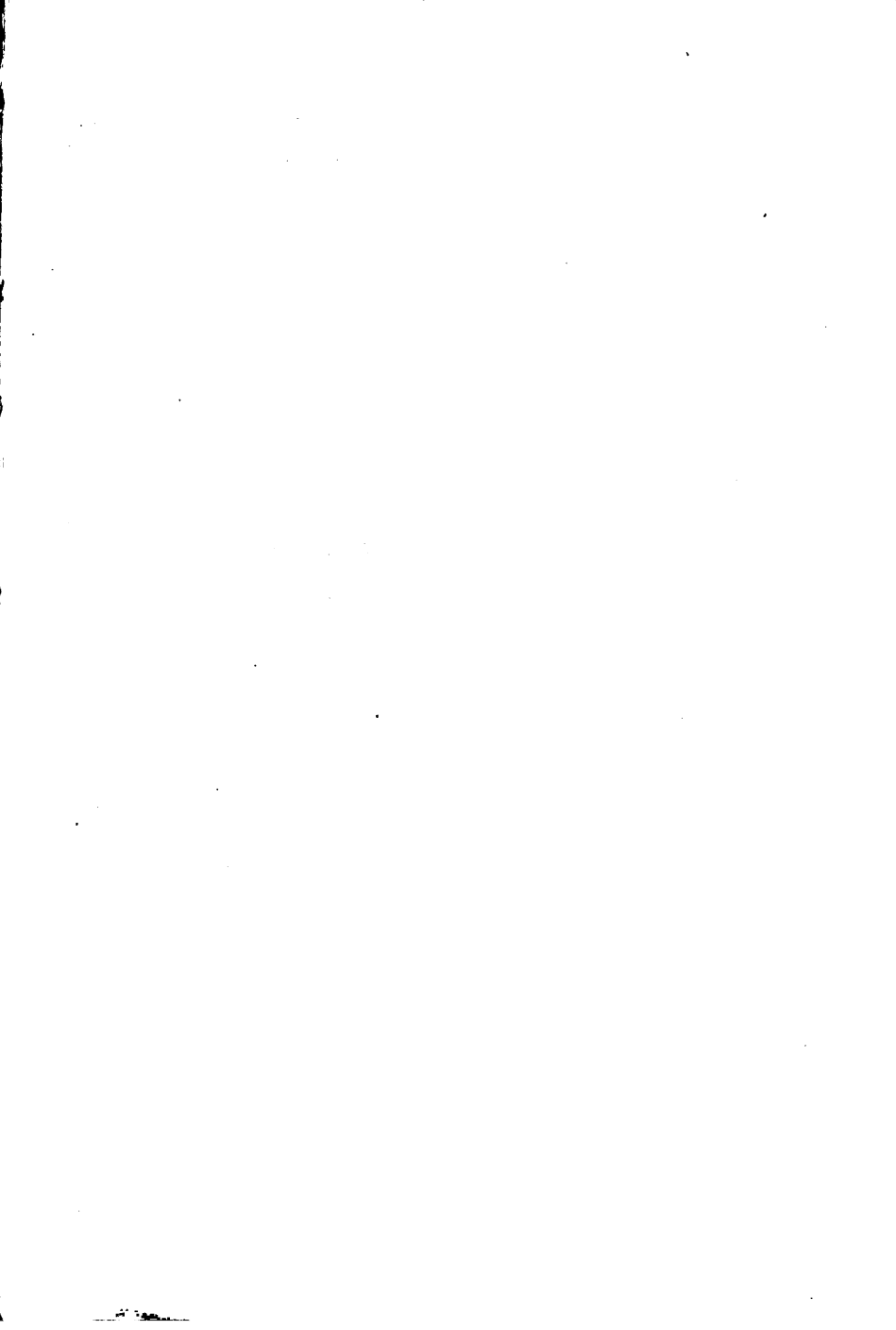




Photo by Bennet. Courtesy of Vagabond Players.

**THE PATCHWORK CURTAIN WHICH SUPPORTS THE "VAGABOND" IDEA**

**A lovely and simple substitution for a heavy velvet curtain.**



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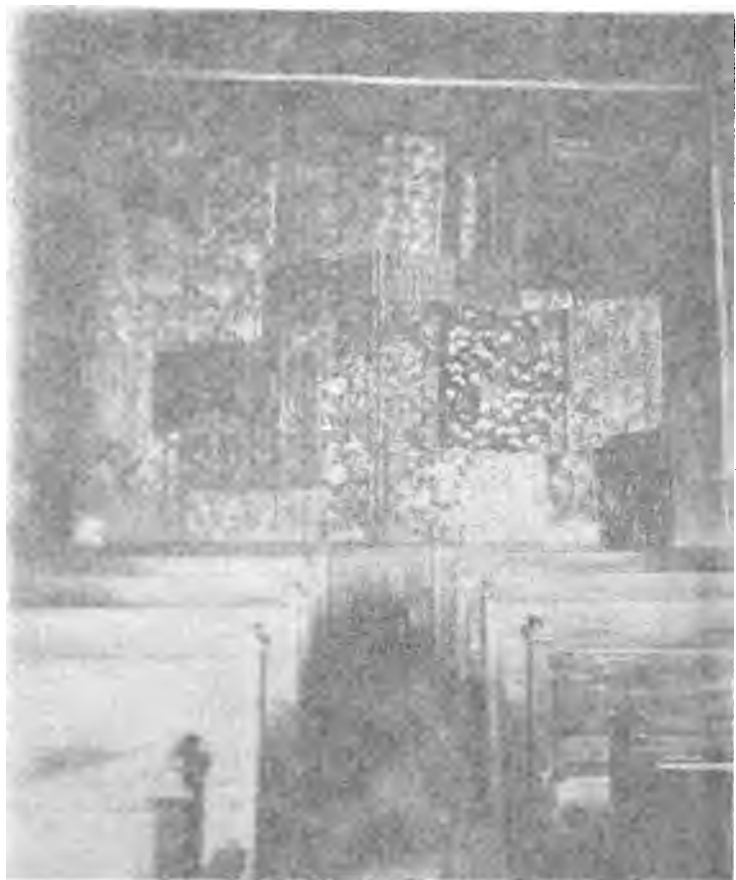


Fig. 1. The "Tapestry of Virginia Places"  
 by the author, 1980. The "Tapestry of Virginia Places"  
 is a large-scale, abstract, and heavily textured artwork, possibly a tapestry or a large-scale painting, featuring a central, dark, rectangular area with intricate, possibly floral or geometric patterns, surrounded by lighter, more textured regions. The overall effect is one of depth and complexity, with various shades of gray and black creating a rich, tactile quality.

The "Tapestry of Virginia Places" is a large-scale, abstract, and heavily textured artwork, possibly a tapestry or a large-scale painting, featuring a central, dark, rectangular area with intricate, possibly floral or geometric patterns, surrounded by lighter, more textured regions. The overall effect is one of depth and complexity, with various shades of gray and black creating a rich, tactile quality. The artwork is displayed against a dark background, and its edges are slightly irregular, suggesting it might be a physical object like a tapestry or a large-scale wall-mounted piece.

# THE COMMUNITY THEATRE

IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

BY  
LOUISE BURLEIGH

*With Illustrations*



BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY  
1917

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*Gift of  
John C. Craig*

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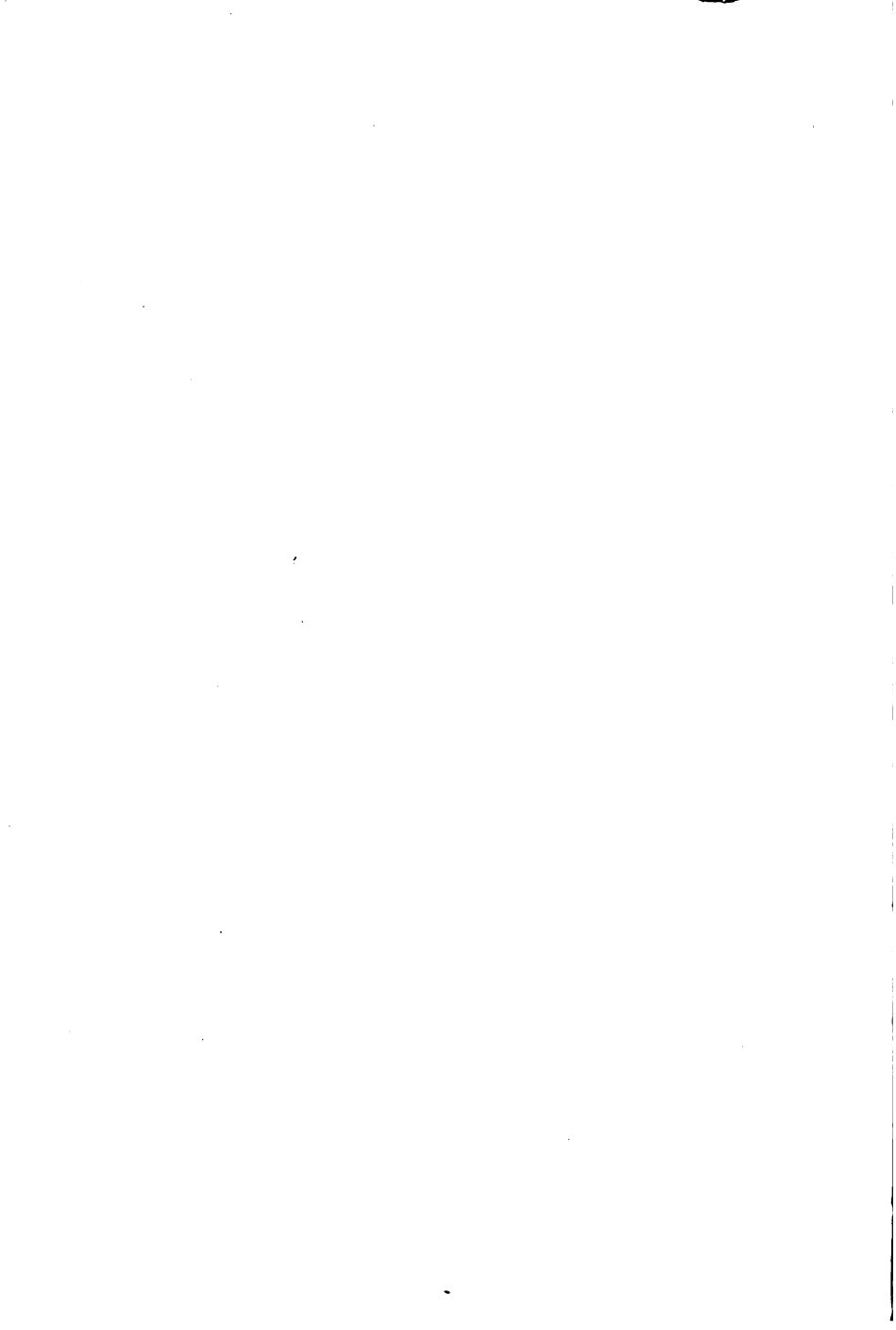
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TO  
CHARLOTTE ELIZA BURLEIGH  
WHOSE GRATEFUL NIECE CAN NEVER SUFFICIENTLY  
THANK HER FOR A LIVING BELIEF  
IN THE  
SPIRIT OF FELLOWSHIP





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## PREFATORY LETTER

DEAR MISS BURLEIGH:

May I thank you for letting me see the proof sheets of your book "The Community Theatre"? And may I congratulate you and your readers on the fact, rare in this field, that this book of yours has been produced by one who is a worker both in the theatre and in the community; for the fusion of the arts of the one with the aspirations of the other is the practical ideal of the community theatre.

Actual experience in both fields should, therefore, precede the making of books on this most practical subject. "After the practice — the theory," as Gordon Craig writes at the head of his journal, *The Mask*. Yet this is too seldom the case; for the workers most skilled and effectual are nearly always too definitely engaged in experiment and creation to become commentators on their work; so

that, in this field, the reading public has often turned too confidently to the writings of commentators untested by sufficient real contact with their subject matter.

Your ardent and broad-spirited work speaks for itself. Examining actual conditions, artistic and social, it points forward with vision — a vision not too far-focussed for present needs. In reaction to its message, it is for me only to wish your book Godspeed, and to touch upon a few aspects of its theme which your treatment suggests.

I do this, may I confess, with the more zeal because I find your pages "backing me up" in so many vital things which, for a good while, my own conviction and experience have brought home to me. Many of these I have set forth very sketchily in my volume "The Civic Theatre", a bird's-eye-view record of work and thoughts in overcrowded years, published by Mitchell Kennerley in 1912. Again in your book there are other vital matters wherein I feel perhaps we differ, rather in a stage of experience than in the goal to be gained.

As example of our common ground of agree-

ment, in your Introduction you aptly define the Community Theatre as "a house of play in which events offer to every member of a body politic active participation in a common interest."

In my volume just referred to, I write:

"A civic theatre is the efficient instrument of the recreative art of a community."

Our definitions, you see, are worded differently, but clearly their meaning is the same: "the civic theatre" and "the community theatre" of our intent are one in idea, but I think "community theatre" is the better name for the idea.

In our goal, then, we are agreed. On our road there perhaps at times we go by different paths.

In a letter to me, referring to your book, you write: "It is my aim to point out that we need not wait for a revolution to found a theatre which shall belong to the community, if we are only willing to examine our communities and, as the expression is, 'begin small.'"

Now if by that expression "begin small" you mean "begin modestly an immense under-

taking", I am sincerely in accord with you. But the danger is lest a community, in beginning their theatre small, should *see it small*.

That would be fatal; for from its very beginnings, however modest, the community theatre must be *seen large* in its far-reaching ideal, or it will fail. Its founders, in short, must have real vision — the vision to realize the deep, revolutionizing forces it sets free, in order that they may control and guide them to constructive social ends.

It is from that conviction that I have written in a recent essay on "Community Drama": — "In approaching my subject, I can approach it in no less a sense than a world sense. . . . Community Drama is testable by the most modest beginnings; but the scope of its principle is vast — or it is nothing."

So, though I am heartily with you in your high valuation of little theatres as centers of community expression, I am none the less sure that numbers of such have actually failed of their true mission because they have not, from the start, been *seen large* by their founders. That is one reason why I believe greatly in the

value of large-scale community festivals as leavening forerunners not only of the right launching of little theatres, but of other more special group organizations in social art, as in community song, the dance, etc.

Such festivals, in forms of community masques, dramas and pageants, awaken popular imagination and enlighten public opinion by the only successful means apparently possible — the tests of actual experience and participation by representative numbers in the coöperative arts involved.

With such purposes directly in mind, I laid out the large-scale plan of the Pageant and Masque of Saint Louis and the structural form of "Caliban"; and personal observation and experience in Saint Louis, New York and Boston have borne out by results my belief in the efficacy of the means employed.

To mention but one happy instance, and the latest to strengthen my belief: As a result of the three weeks' production of "Caliban" last month at the Harvard Stadium, a permanent Caliban Community League of Greater Boston, comprising seventeen Caliban Clubs in differ-



ent sections of the community, has been organized "to encourage and foster the community ideals exemplified in *Caliban* by developing and practicing community drama, community singing and music and other community activities in which all citizens may coöperate" — the League having a published journal of its own, "The Caliban News"; and being officered by sincere enthusiastic workers in the Masque, backed by the loyalty of many hundreds of participants.

One mistake, I think, we who write books or prefaces should do our best to avoid: I mean the mistake of discussing institutions, organizations, classified subjects, as "things in themselves" apart from the human persons who actually give them form and being. Here, for instance, in these remarks of mine and in your book, are discussed such classified subjects as the Community Theatre, the Little Theatre, the Masque, the Pageant, the Sociological Theatre. But, unavoidable as this use of terms may be, do these things ever exist as separate entities except in books? When they are truly significant, are these

✓ organic agencies ever really alive apart from their creators?

Looking back over ten years or more of work in this field, the truth is borne in upon me by many experiences that the forms of community drama, though they involve a vast social co-operation, are no exception to the law that art forms and their organization are the product ✓ of personal invention on the part of artists and organizers.

Vast spectacles and dances, in which thousands participate in color and motion; noble compositions, in which many hundreds take part through harmonious sound; organizations, through which multitudes coöperate without friction, unaware of the means of their doing so:—all these first took form in the imaginations of a very few inventive human beings, single or in small groups; and the success or failure of those spectacles, dances, compositions, organizations, will depend in large measure on the technical equipment and foresight of those human first causes of their being.

So, to treat of them apart from their human causes would be misleading. Little Theatres,

Community Theatres, Sociological Theatres, etc. will depend for their value — not upon valuations in theory and classification, but upon actually *whose* theatres they are: who conceives them, who organizes them, who operates them.

This is not to minimize the immense value, sociologic and artistic, of audiences and their influence on dramatic art-forms, justly emphasized in your book; but it is rightly to raise to their great value the guiding and creative influences of those artists of the theatre, always necessarily few, whose responsive imaginations shape the forms by means of which audiences and participants are enabled to coöperate in an harmonious whole.

So in your book, if I may venture the criticism, in emphasizing truly as you do the undoubted dramatic renaissance in which our country is taking part, and even in stressing the vital significance of the theatre artist in general, I wish that you might have given more direct special emphasis to those living creative personalities in America — such as Robert Edmond Jones, designer, and Arthur

Farwell, composer — who are helping to shape the destiny of the community theatre.

The social forces evoked by special genius in this field are, of course, vaster than any individuals involved. How efficient an instrument of these forces he may become is the test of the community artist. So it is that I have seen the community drama movement in America, by virtue of its own democratic might, grow and flourish from almost nothing to flowerings of awe-inspiring grandeur; and this, with practically no support, in its struggling stages, from popular journalism; and with no comprehending attention or valuation accorded to it by those critics and philosophical students of our time whom the thinking public looks to and counts upon to interpret the vital signs and portents of democracy. Neither in journals radical, progressive, or conservative, appealing to the general public, will you find yet any appropriate recognition of the power and the beauty of this creative movement: neither in "The Masses", nor "The New Republic", nor "The Nation."

Yet happily, though the social critics and

philosophers might conceivably do much to help it, this movement is self-reliant in the spirit of its own workers and participants — the living spirit of that art which is true democracy. And you, Miss Burleigh, who are one of those real workers, may take joy — through this gallant, interpretive emprise of yours — in joining a small band of high-hearted pioneers, in whose trail — when it becomes well worn — the formal philosophers are sure to follow.

Meanwhile, a happy work-time to you and your book!

Sincerely yours,

PERCY MACKAYE.

CORNISH, N. H.

7th August, 1917.

## INTRODUCTION

OF the many changes which the past fifteen years have seen in our theatre, undoubtedly the most momentous is the abolition of the footlights. The importance of their banishment lies not in the artistic value but rather in the spiritual significance of the achievement. The footlights were a barrier between the actor and the audience. By them the theatre was divided into two distinct and separate parts, like two countries whose common boundary is a great river or high mountains. Indeed, we spoke of the division as did the ancient Romans of the Alps, referring to "beyond the footlights" or to "this side of the footlights." The removal of the barrier affects not only the workers on the stage but those whose task is to create from the seats of the auditorium — for the need for active coöperation on the part of the audience is fast becoming a commonplace — and it is because of this duality

that the innovation is more important than its fellows.

How different is the New Theatre from that of twenty years ago! On the stage side of the footlights there has been created a new being, the artist of the theatre. And this artist of the theatre, about whom much has been said and written, and who is perhaps best compared to the leader of an orchestra, has summoned help from all the arts to weave a new texture of beauty. The architect and the sculptor have brought beauty of construction and cleared away the clutter of unneeded detail; the painter has colored the setting with imagination and made meanings where before there were only haphazard imitations of what we see every day; the musician has filled pauses with beauty; the dancer and the poet have not been neglected; and finally even the scientist has been called in to give of his knowledge. It is as if the stage had expanded, pushing and pushing in growth until it burst its restraint; and, flowing over the footlights, it extinguished them as it went, and finally reached the audience.

For the artist of the theatre has always understood that all the means at his command are but instruments for the service of the audience. Without the audience he is lost. The movement on the stage, while it is the reason for the existence of the spectators, cannot escape the domination exercised by them. It is the aim of every artist in the theatre to unite the spirits of his audience into one thought and to express that thought through action on his stage. So from the beginning of the theatrical renaissance, of which we are now a part, stage directors have been reaching out over the audience, and in order to encourage their spiritual coöperation, have often given them an actual physical part to play. The prologue once more walks our boards. The "Flowery Way" down which the actors come to the stage has been set up in our western theatre by Professor Reinhardt, following the happy custom of Japan. Mr. Stuart Walker has personified the listener; in one of his plays at least, "You-in-the-Audience" not only speaks, but actually wanders up to the stage, takes part in the play, and at last solves



the quandaries of the characters to every one's satisfaction. It seems to me that Mr. Walker, who has the instincts of the stage artist so highly developed that he is able to turn from writing to acting and directing with perfect ease, has intuitively hit upon a great truth, and has in his character of "You-in-the-Audience" made a symbolical forecast of the next step in the progress of the theatrical art. The artists of the theatre, like the people in Mr. Walker's charming play, have done their very best. It is time for "You-in-the-Audience" to go up and take a hand.

Now just as it is true that changes have swept over the stage in the theatre, is it true that something has happened to the audience. The architecture of our Theatre proves it. The old theatres were made up of tier upon tier of boxes and galleries, while some of our newer ones have less than three hundred seats. When the New Theatre was built in New York, its construction followed the old lines, and the New Theatre failed with a promptness which has been referred to many times by theatrical commentators. Undoubtedly there is a pre-

dominance of the style of play which demands an audience near at hand, but is that very predominance not a symptom rather than a disease? The kind of play which has an intellectual appeal, fundamentally, will not reach a large audience; the large audience demands great, simple emotions: conversely, the small audience demands a limited range of emotions and usually will prefer to be stirred through the intellect than through the emotions. So the Little Theatre in New York, with its exquisite productions of intellectual delicacies, may be thought to limit its audience by the size of its auditorium. Or, on the other hand, it may be considered to be the answer to a demand made by a few: the reply perhaps to the indifference of thousands who have gone elsewhere for their entertainment and delight.

✓ For we have in our theatre everything but an audience. Small groups of interested spectators there are, and I am glad to believe that the number is increasing. But now the mass of the people, the people with simple emotions and simple appreciations, are not in the theatre. Where are they? They may be sleeping;

they may not know that there is a theatre. Miss Jane Addams tells a poignant tale of a Greek fruit vender who did not know there were Americans who loved the ancient beauty of his country. He had brought with him mementos of that loveliness, hoping to find interest in his new home; but his customers refused to be led to speak of Greece's glory, and it was only when he happened upon a picture of the Acropolis at Hull House that he revealed the sketches and drawings he had made. No doubt there are people to whom the theatre has not shown herself except as the home of false values, the exhibition room of ugliness and even of vice. How glad those people would be to be discovered by the artist of the theatre!

✓ Others of the audience for which we are seeking may be in the motion-picture theatres. The architecture once more seems to be a key . . . the old theatres have many of them been converted into "movie houses" or have been replaced by buildings which follow in some measure their generous lines. These houses are filled not once a day but again and again

from morning till night. Much has been wisely said and much foolishly upon this matter. Authorities differ very widely upon the cause for the popularity of the movie; one would have us think that it is the new art of democracy in its toddling infancy; another assures us that it is popular because it is inexpensive; and a third that it is a fad and will soon lose its supporters. No doubt there is truth in each statement; but this is not the place for a prolonged discussion of the value of the motion picture except as it affects the audience of the spoken drama.

When the artist of the theatre looks to the motion-picture house for the audience which he desires, his first query will be, naturally, will the audience come back to the spoken drama from the silent one? Yes, a thousand times yes. The motion picture may develop into many things which it is not in its present state, but it will never replace the spoken drama. The motion-picture enthusiast does not scorn the theatre. Some four years ago the present writer was acting in a small, ill-trained, and unpretending company whose

duty was to fill the gaps in the routine of films in a motion-picture theatre. The management boasted that their films were the best in the city: the audience paid its ten cents at the door and demanded full value for it. The hard-working company gave hastily prepared but sincere representations of good one-act plays. The performance flowed steadily from ten in the morning until ten at night, repeating itself three times during the day. If we accept the theory so often put forward that the movie lover loses his interest in the spoken drama, we should expect to hear that during the playlet the audience became inattentive, or perhaps that they left the theatre when it was announced. This was not true, in spite of the inferior quality of the acting seen in the play to that on the screen. (Inferior it undoubtedly was: the film actors were artists ranging from John Bunny to Sarah Bernhardt!) But, far from leaving the theatre, the audience applied continually at the box office for the hour of the play in order that they might not miss it. The motion picture had not hurt the audience for the spoken drama; indeed, I

think there had been the creation of an audience in that theatre. Nor was its audience in any way unique: it was the average motion-picture audience. Its attitude, then, may be taken as typical of motion-picture audiences, and it is safe to assume that they are in general ready to be called back into the theatre. They will come no doubt with a new taste, but come they will. The artist of the theatre will find them with lamps trimmed and burning.

But there are other signs that the audience is waiting to be called into the theatre. A movement which had fundamentally no connection with the art of the theatre has brought the audience to its doors. This is the movement of social reorganization led by the social scientist.

The social scientist represents the auditorium as the artist of the theatre does the stage; he seeks to awaken his group to consciousness of self. And after groping here and there he has hit upon the value of play, especially coöperative play, in his work. And play has led him to the arts of the theatre.

Not long ago in our puritanical order of

living, play was despised. Then Froebel discovered its value as an educative force, and when it had won its way so far into our lives, it began to be studied for its own sake. The history of play is an interesting one which the world cannot afford to neglect. It carries with it the sanity and joy of living, and because it permits the expression of emotions, it leads to art, and more than to any art, to the art of the theatre.

The earlier forms of play to which the social scientist turned were undeveloped expressions of the art of the theatre. The playgrounds for children — to be spoken of more fully later on — were the first and simplest result. The need for play in older children was answered by dance halls and clubs, and the development assumed the actual outlines of the theatrical art in the first dramatic clubs created with a social end. From these clubs there have grown up a series of small theatres — the most vigorous assertion by the audience that it wishes to come into the theatre.

But — and this is the most important point of all — the audience does not want to come

into the theatre to sit inert. To use again the phraseology of Mr. Walker's play, "You-in-the-Audience" is ready to mount the stage and play his part; the artists of the theatre have done all they can as yet; the progress of the action awaits the worker from the auditorium; and the most vital point becomes the method by which the audience shall be taught to assume its responsibilities. It seems a somewhat terrifying fact that the success or failure of the theatre must rest with untaught and untrained people. Will the art of the theatre languish and die? Can the yoke of art be made to fit a democracy?

Our democracy has begun the solution of similar problems. The public schools — imperfect, experimental, everchanging, but under State control — are the reply to a demand for education: the great library systems which we see expanding year by year, are the answer to the need for broader culture; certain arts — painting and sculpture for example — have half-way recognition in museums; and yet none of these things, neither education, culture, nor the arts of painting and sculpture, have the



purely *social* quality which is inherent in the dramatic art. For the theatre cannot exist without its audience . . . its immediate, living, breathing audience. It is as much a concern of all the people as the conservation of resources, the direction of labor, and the promotion of agriculture. Shall we then expect to find a Commission of the Theatrical Arts at Washington?

Already certain artists have suggested that something of the kind might be possible. The government is fast taking over every subject which concerns the public good, and making it the business of the government to administer such matters; why not, then, the question of public recreation?

If we were a bureaucratic state, it would be a simple matter to impose a system of state theatres. A director is appointed, let us say, a chain of theatres is built, and each is put into the hands of an expert, who instantly draws about him a staff of able workmen — behold an efficient machinery for the production of Theatrical Art! And yet what proof have we that the audience which stays away from the

present commercial theatre would fill the vacant seats of one which came as the gift of a paternal despotism? Even if they did come for a short time there are many reasons to suppose that they would not continue to support a theatre so established. A state theatre must not be a theatre which is applied to the community from without or from above; it cannot be the perfected dream of artists; it must spring from the dreams and needs of the everyday person, the need for expression of a whole community. When individual communities have felt the need for a group expression strongly enough, when each has — imperfect and struggling — an organization for the expression of community emotion, there will come spontaneously from the whole people the demand for a central art direction. It will be then that the theatrical art will be in flower, and until then we must look for groping and imperfection.

In these chapters it is the aim of the author to consider the social quality of the dramatic art, the emotional needs of an ordinary community, and to point out that each may have

its greatest opportunity for perfection through a theatre based upon those principles upon which democratic institutions must be built.

And, since English is so inaccurate a language, and since we are so susceptible to catch phrases, it may be well to set down at once the meaning of the term "Community Theatre" as used in this volume. Later it will be necessary to dissect and explain at length the derivation of each phrase, but at present it will be sufficient to express it as clearly as possible in order that no misunderstanding may arise.

*The Community Theatre is a house of play in which events offer to every member of a body politic active participation in a common interest.*

This definition is broad enough to allow great latitude in its local application, a very necessary quality in so varied and heterogeneous a state as our own. It can be applied, I believe, with no fundamental alteration to large as well as to small communities, just as, in spite of Plato's assertion that it could not, a democratic form of government has been found successful in states of over five thousand inhabitants.

What growth may come to the community theatre as it reaches out and grows under the influence of practice it is not possible to imagine, but we should be indeed visionless if we did not believe that its flowering will exceed all our hopes. It is this quality which has made democratic institutions beloved of poets and seers since the day of Pericles in Athens when the glimmerings of democratic dawn were first visible — this blossoming beyond the belief of those who sow the seed.

And yet, in spite of an apparent looseness in the general terms of the definition, precise limits have been set for the community theatre so defined. In order to see what it may not and what it must not do, it will be well to study with attention some of the independent, small, non-commercial (in the usual sense of *Broadway*) theatres which have come into being all over the country. They offer much that is practical and helpful in the organization of the community theatre, even while they prove that the fact of their origin outside the ranks of the theatrical profession is not sufficient to endow them with magical virtues. Followers

of the Little Theatre movement have been too eager to accept any independent theatrical organization and to assume that everything which came from such a source was invariably fine. On the other hand, the enemies of the movement have been quick to condemn all Little Theatres as the feeble striving of dabblers. As is usual, the truth lies somewhere between these two extreme views. The Little Theatre has made contributions to the art of the theatre already, but its greatest gift is the promise which it carries, the hope of the theatre as an institution of the people.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOR the use of photographs I am indebted to Mr. Stuart Walker of the Portmanteau Theatre, to the Vagabond Theatre in Baltimore, the Forest Theatre of Carmel-by-the-Sea, and the Idler Club of Radcliffe College.

To the officers of these theatres and their fellows of the Appendix, I am under obligation for continued courtesy. I trust that in some slight way the results may prove helpful to that enthusiasm of which the Little Theatre is a sign.

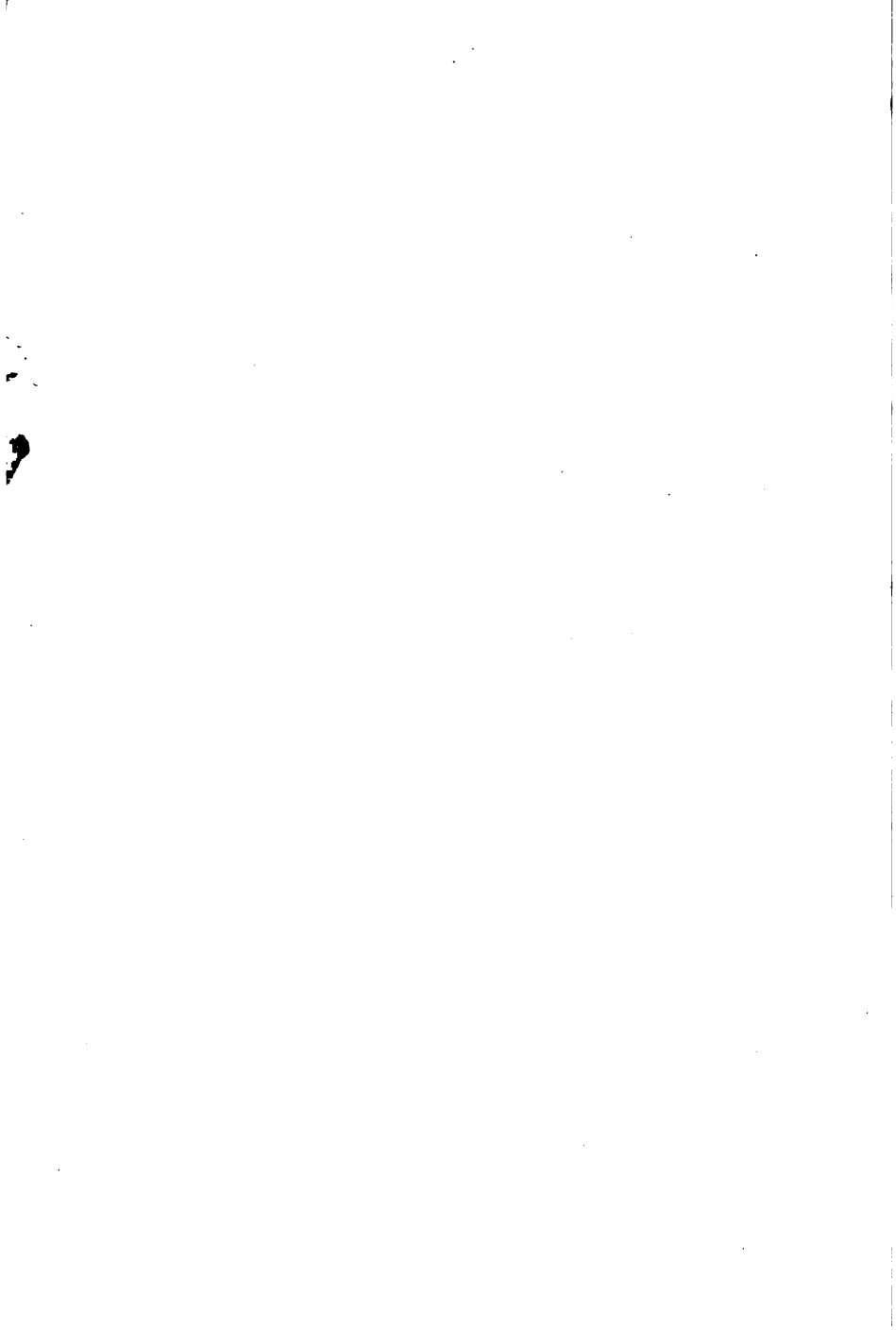
Finally, I owe much to my generous friends. But especially do I wish to thank Fräulein Mayer, Mr. Sheldon Cheney, and Mr. Percy MacKaye for the benefit of their experience conferred by an unfailing interest.

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Produced by the Idler Club of Radcliffe College, under the direction of Mr. Sam Hume.	





# THE COMMUNITY THEATRE

## CHAPTER I

### THE COMMUNITY

WHY do we need a Community Theatre? Let us, before deciding, look for a moment at the modern community.

The dictionary says that a community is "a body politic; any body of persons having common interests, privileges, etc.; a sharing or participation." Further, that useful book quotes in exposition of the word's use, this statement from J. R. Seeley, "Three ties by which states are held together are community of race, community of religion, and community of interest." Using this definition and this quotation as a basis, let us examine communities as we know them, to discover just how closely the meaning of the word may be said to apply.

Modern communities are communities only

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in the loosest sense in which the word can be taken. A city is a great group of people living within certain geographical limits. It is to be sure "a body politic", but it has no common interests which weld it into a great whole; except in one case in a thousand there is not the least sign of participation in a common life. This principle is equally true in the small communities, but it is more self-evident in a large city. The commercial organization of society is based primarily upon competition which has resulted in disunion rather than coöperation. The effects can be most clearly seen in the great centres.

What homogeneity is there in an American city? Every race of the earth goes to make up the citizenry. This is no longer true merely of eastern cities, it is true of all cities, east, west, north, and south. Nor are the European and Asiatic newcomers the only foreigners; there are as well those hordes of country-born and country-bred city-dwellers to whom the city always seems strange. Sometimes the inhabitants of one locality in a city have brought with them traditions which they

hold in common, but they are the traditions of another place and of an older race than the city in which they live. So we find a Ghetto, an Italian quarter, a German colony, and a French settlement, each preserving the memory of home perhaps, but entering into the life of the American city of which it is a part, without organization, without any definite and common ground except the struggle for existence.

Yet all our cities have made partial attempts to find some sort of common ground for their inhabitants. The working people have organized themselves into unions of the various trades, feeling for fellowship as well as for financial gain. But unions are limited, and they include few of the people in a great city, even when they are bound one to the other in a kind of Super-Union. They do not supply the need for an amalgamating force, but rather they tend, like everything else in a great commercial centre, to emphasize the difference between one class of citizens and another.

To be sure, in cities everywhere a system of organized play has grown up, there are munici-

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pal entertainments, municipal baths, and parks which are certainly for all the population. Notwithstanding, such provisions made by the city are regarded not as a privilege, but rather as a last resort; we do not find all New York splashing happily in the Public Baths! Every class of citizen may be seen in Central Park, to be sure; artists paint it, leaders of society gallop along the bridle paths, children of the very rich feed the swans, and tattered little boys play at hide and seek in the shade of the trees; but in all this there is nothing which draws these individuals closer together. There is nothing beyond what lies in the common possession of paved streets and a water supply. Taxes pay for the smoothness of the lawns, everything is impersonal, removed from actual experience. It must of necessity be so, but think what a difference could be made if the millionaire whose motor slips daily along those level drives and the loungeur who eats his dry roll on the green carpet were personally responsible for the care and the beauty of that park; if, for example, each threw off his coat and bent his back to a

lawn mower, one day in the year, by the side of the other! Would the great park be then a mere physical accident, a geographical bond?

But beyond the impersonal quality of public possessions, all those of the city have tended, because of our capitalistic and commercial organization of the state, to separate individuals into classes rather than to unite all classes into a unified community. Parks, libraries and even the public schools have been looked upon as a beneficence, almost as a charity, provided for the poor by taxing the rich. The children of well-to-do parents and of the professional classes are sent to private schools, they play in the parks under the eyes of nurses, and when they grow old enough to use the library, there is little in the quiet of the great reading room to inspire the feeling that every reader is a fellow citizen, sharing the store of knowledge for which the library stands, striving the same ideals, and equally responsible for the beauty of a common life. It is natural that cities built upon a basis of commercial enterprise should emphasize differences in wealth as they grow; the accident of locality,

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— rich and poor do not live side by side, — such everyday matters as means of transportation, places and manner of worship, the devices employed for entertainment, all tend to widen the breach.

For example, take religion. What community can be united in a common religion? Toleration in religious belief is perhaps more fundamental than any other tenet in the creed of our democracy: not only in cities but everywhere. In the smallest settlements spire strives against spire to attest the liberty we suffer in the worship of God. Great cities harbor strange beliefs, old and new, unprosecuted. But even the followers of a single creed are not necessarily united. This is true primarily in cities where the ritual of worship varies less widely than the ritual of social life. It is a tragic reality that the union achieved when men kneel side by side in prayer is more than offset by the fact that the one walks home to cabbage with boiled beef while the other is borne in a liveried carriage to the fastidious ceremony of course upon course. Moreover, in cities the poor man and

the rich one do not worship side by side. Fashionable churches support missions which share their creeds and even their management, but which prevent actual contact between those who should be neighbors. Once more the simple accident of geography has made a high barrier.

Common ancestors have vanished. A common worship no longer exists. There remains only the "community of interest" of which Mr. Seeley speaks. Clearly our cities have none. Now and then, temporarily, a sporadic interest arises strong enough to reach all the inhabitants: there is need for a drainage system; or, some keen demand of the schools, some widespread lack in public works, which molds the citizens into a single-minded body. But when the end is achieved, there is certain to be a lapse into the old disorganization.

The most evident needs in our modern life are those which spring from great disasters. For example, in Salem, Massachusetts, there was a great and terrible fire, destroying life and property and calling out the most simple



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and most human qualities and emotions. Response was instant. Life grew simple in a moment, and, overnight, strangers were converted into neighbors. And as long as the emotion lasted, the coöperation held them together; then life settled once more into its normal rut. So too, on the dock of a great steamship line, a group of strangers gathered to say *bon voyage* to those who were sailing to the danger zone: before the gangplank was up there was a fellowship among them, and when the last sight of the boat had failed, they walked quietly away, chatting together like friends. One after another we have seen the countries of the world welded into units by the horrible blast of war, by the influence of a great idea clothed in terms of human emotion. Is it not possible to apply the lesson which it teaches to peace, to our lives as we live them, day by day?

It is more than possible — it is being done. Organizations for peace are becoming more and more popular: the Red Cross, which originated in war, has carried its usefulness over into the fighting of accidents and calami-

ties of peace, the Boy Scouts are organized primarily for everyday life, and here and there all over the country, pageants and masques have been springing up to rouse civic interest and civilian pride.

The case of the city of St. Louis, although most often cited, is perhaps more conclusive than any other. Civic reform is valuable only when it is permanent, and it will not be permanent if it is not the work of all the citizens. The few in St. Louis who felt the need of a new charter and of the completion of a great municipal bridge, knew that these things must be the work not of the few, but of the entire citizenry. And with an insight which bespeaks great things for our future as an artistic unity and as a unified nation, they turned to the arts of the theatre to accomplish the persuasion of the citizens. The result was the achievement for which they were seeking — the new charter was made and the bridge was built — moreover, there is the promise of more permanent union in artistic causes in St. Louis.

But the organization of a complex and diffuse group like the city is naturally more

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difficult than that of a smaller one. So the Masque of Caliban, produced in celebration of the Shakespeare Tercentenary, was less visibly successful than the Masque of St. Louis; and just so the smaller and more intimate attempts in villages have been more immediately effective. However, the need for a unifying force is none the less present in the small than in the large community: there is perhaps a more crying demand for a common interest in small isolated villages than in the great cities.

It used to be true of American villages that they were somewhat held together by ties of race. Now most villages fall into two classes, those which have not been reinforced from the new material, and those which have more new blood than they have assimilated. Every frequenter of the backwater of New England is familiar with the tragedy of the town where intermarriage has been the rule for four or five consecutive generations, and from which the youth and the rugged strength has been sapped by emigration with no renewal from outside. Such towns usually have an appalling

percentage of degenerates and invalids, and in such towns there is practically no industry; the people make a living — meagre as it is — and ask for nothing more. There is no joy, no vitality, no life in the real sense. Social life is a set of conventions, religion is the following of a dogma; men breed and feed and die. Vice in the most dreadful forms exists in these villages, hand-in-hand with disease of body and mind. When the outside world comes to visit them it brings more of a curse than a blessing, for it usually comes seeking pleasure, and the natives find the most superficial and unfortunate characteristics supreme in the advent of “summer people.” Whatever rural simplicity may have existed is destroyed by the intrusion of a sophisticated point of view, and the fraction of the country folk who do not emulate the newcomer, generally join forces against him.

In the little village of X — there is one long main street upon which most of the four hundred inhabitants live. Not far away there is a summer colony centred round an hotel, and scattered through the town are houses which

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are closed in winter, but which are still considered an integral part of the village. The owner of such a house, Mrs. Norman, whose years of good citizenship had endeared her to the community, met in a distant city a village woman, Mrs. Prince. They chatted long about the distant little town: Mrs. Prince had much to tell of what had happened on the quiet street. In leaving Mrs. Norman remembered to send a message to a neighbor, the friend of years, whose unobtrusive cottage lay between her own large house and that of Mrs. Prince. Mrs. Prince hesitated. "But I shall probably not see her before you do," she said. "Of course, one can not know *every one*, even in X —."

Clearly there is need for some force which shall offset so false a social standard, and for this force it is hopeless to look to the Church. Once more the toleration which is our pride serves to divide rather than to weld the factors. In most villages of such a type there are too many churches — half filled and sleepy. The unfortunate preacher is unable to do anything for his parish; often he wishes to unite with

some other church and is prevented by tradition, and the most he can do is to struggle along cheerfully, underpaid and overworked. The younger people find the church stupid; there is no new life in it. They have deserted the puritanical standards of their fathers, and they want to dance, to sing, to enjoy life; but such matters are not considered the problems for which the Church exists, and so the young people gather at the corner drug store instead of in the church.

In other settlements a new problem is introduced by an influx of Roman Catholic peoples. These are the towns which have industries, factories, and mills to which newly-made Americans are carried by their employment. And where lately was a quiet town with traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race, with a population largely "American-born", there is suddenly a flood of broken English and the chatter of strange tongues; a new town springs up within the old one yet apart from it. Once more the problem is one of amalgamation. How shall the strange elements be mingled and made one? Not through race, not through

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religion, but through some institution which shall offer a common interest — an interest which shall include all the varieties and which shall by that very inclusion teach the one to understand the other.

The diversity of race which is after all the most outstanding fact of our population is considered by many people a cause for agitation. From time to time staggering statistics are published, and intelligent people read them with anxious expressions. At all times and in all places, "peril" and "menace" are spoken as synonyms for immigration. It is said that the newcomers from Southern Europe are especially dangerous to our democracy — and yet, democracy was first dreamed of in Greece, and Rome built the first republic.

Those who have been privileged to know intimately certain of our "foreign" population feel quite at ease as to the outcome . . . *if we can make use of the good impulses before the bad ones have been fostered by those who would twist them to evil ends.* They are so eager to be Americans, so ready to believe all that is fine of their new country. There is not

the least hesitation in their minds as to their nationality, even before the intricacies of the English language are wholly understood. It would be possible to multiply examples to prove this, but one story will be sufficient.

In a little New Hampshire village settled long ago by straight-laced Protestants, a tiny wooden Roman Catholic Church has been built, in which the good Father every Sunday says Mass, preaching not only in English, but in French as well, for those of his flock who have not yet picked up the strange tongue. The faces of the congregation are laughing Celtic faces, some Irish and some French: there is not one Anglo-Saxon among them all. Across the way, however, descendants of the early settlers still gather in the half vacant and wholly uncomfortable pews of the neat white Congregational Church. They speak with no little scorn of their neighbors, usually calling them, "them cath'lic furreners."

But one summer day when the warm air inspired dullness and drowsiness, the priest made an appeal to his people which rang so



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clearly even in his broken English that it could be heard across the silent village street in the calm of the long prayer. The collection for the day was to be used to heat the church in winter; it was necessary that the imaginations of his flock be roused. He expostulated and besought them, drawing a vivid picture of the shivering during Christmas Mass, and finally — not without a perceptible twinkle of amusement — he said that he should descend from the chancel and pass the plate in person. It was here that his voice grew tense with indignation at the thought of the comparison which he was about to make. “I must take the collection!” he cried. “There are some people who will not give until the collection is made by the priest . . . and there are people who give one penny Sunday after Sunday . . . who give to the Church of God what they would throw to a monkey sitting on the shoulder of a *foreigner* with a hand organ!” And his voice had the same note of pride which might have been heard across the way among the first families!

And that “foreigner” with the monkey —

what was he in his own thought? Not a foreigner, not an Italian; no, he like the others, was an American. And so through all the diversity of race there is in our State a bond which is stronger and finer than any mere physical tie could ever be—the spiritual community of ideals to which Mr. Wilson gave voice in a speech to new citizens in Philadelphia on the tenth of May, 1915. I can do no better than to set down in Mr. Wilson's own words the expression of those ideals:

You who have just sworn allegiance to this great government were drawn across the ocean by some beckoning finger, by some belief, by some vision of a new kind of justice, by some expectation of a better kind of life.

No doubt you have been disappointed in some of us, and some of us are very disappointing. No doubt what you found here did not seem touched for you, after all, with the complete beauty of the ideal which you had conceived beforehand; but remember this, if we have grown at all poor at the ideal, you have brought some of it with you. A man does not go to seek the thing that is not in him. A man does not hope for the thing that he does not believe in, and if some of us have forgotten what America believed in, you, at any rate,

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imported in your own hearts a renewal of the belief.

That is the reason why I for one, make you welcome. If I have forgotten in any degree what America was intended for, I will thank God if you remind me. I was born in America. You dreamed dreams of what America was to be, and I hope you brought the dreams with you. No man who does not rightly see visions will ever realize any high hope or undertake any high enterprise, and just because you brought the dreams with you, America is more likely to realize the dreams such as you brought.

So if you come into this great nation, you will have to come voluntarily, seeking something which we have to give. All that we have to give is this: we cannot exempt you from work. We cannot exempt you from strife, the heart-breaking burden of the struggle of the day that has come to mankind everywhere. We cannot exempt you from the loads that you must carry: we can only make them light by the spirit in which they are carried, because it is the spirit of hope, it is the spirit of liberty, it is the spirit of justice.

Our State, even in its small communities, cannot be held together by race nor by religion. For a unifying force we must find a living expression of a great common ideal: we must depend upon a community of interest: we

must find an institution in which great and small can find expression. The art of the theatre, or more precisely, the allied arts of the theatre, are utterly calculated to perform this service.

## CHAPTER II

### SOCIOLOGICAL THEATRE: PLAYGROUNDS AND PAGEANTS

A SOLEMN small boy bent double over a sand pile is not an unusual sight. Drawing deep breaths in his concentration, he remains absorbed until the task which he has set for himself is completed. Then, with a glance of triumphant pride, he is likely to turn to the nearest bystander with some such brevity as "See!"

It used to be only on beaches at the seashore and in back yards that we came upon children thus, but now even in the most crowded parts of our precipitate cities, there are scattered groups, the nucleus of a giant organism, the germ of the recreation centre. And the flat, insignificant sand bin traces its growth back through a numerous, distinguished ancestry. In its extraordinary pedigree are names which

seem to have little in common with an unassuming heap of sand. Plato, Kant, Hegel, Schiller, Froebel, Groos, and James are there, with Stanley Hall, Judge Lindsey, and Joseph Lee. The thought of generations conceived, and the practical, present-day energy gave birth to it. But it does not rest on the glory of its family tree: it is not only a descendant of illustrious persons. The sand pile is already an ancestor: it has given us the recreation centre, the city playground. And from the playground other great gifts are coming.

"See," demands the small sand digger, and holds up a box cover mounded with the shining grains. What do we see? Not a mud pie: this is rather a doorway opened into the long corridors of man's most ancient instincts. Here is the culmination of the universal impulse to play, the psychological analysis of that impulse, and its relation to the history of mankind's progress.

From antiquity there has been discussion of the values of play. But with the new science of psychology came a discovery which gave it a fresh importance, that is, that play is not

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only useful but actually necessary to human life. The study of play and its subdivision into categories is complex and often confusing: it is sufficient to say that we have seen it proved how play, directed, becomes education.

This great contribution to our constructive philosophy came from Germany, and is amazingly modern. Froebel, to whom we turn for a crystallization of the ideas most fundamental in child psychology, assures us that education must be through self-activity. The child, playing, molds himself into a man. By struggling with the gesture, he learns the meaning. So the kindergarten, out-of-doors, with its *gartener* to lead and direct the children's happy occupation, may well be called the first playground.

But when we turn to those centres of city recreation which are given the name in America, we find the earliest attempts coming from isolated benevolent social organizations. The first playgrounds were in Boston, but spontaneous growths having no apparent connection with them followed in New York and in other cities. In the year 1906, the Playground

Association of America was organized, although at that time there were only twenty cities in which playgrounds were being kept alive. The number has grown by leaps and bounds, the activities have increased and multiplied: no longer a group of sand piles in a vacant lot constitutes all that is necessary; there is complex apparatus and a trained corps of directors. And from the impulse of scattered individuals, it has become a movement of municipalities.

The primary function of the playground was to give space and opportunity for children to satisfy their natural and necessary impulse to play. Sand boxes, with other equipment — swings, slides, and seesaws — were erected in a vacant lot, and the playground pronounced ready for use. But the friction which always results from human relations was not lacking in this case: trouble followed the gathering of so many and so varied children in one small spot: the need for a director was immediately apparent. Moreover, if the play was to educate as well as to occupy, it must be led into the proper channels. For that play which has the



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highest value for the molding of the man is not the individual play in a sand pile, but the coöperative play of group games.

So the playground has satisfied first the desire to retrace in each individual the history of the mysterious race of mankind; the little child swings high and low with an exultation which he does not ask to understand, and dabbles in warm or moist sand, renewing some ancient emotional memory. Then he grows older. He comes to be aware of the existence of his fellows, he is taught loyalty and team play, the value of sacrifice to the whole, of which he is a part. Friendship and loyalty, obedience to rules, and the qualities of leadership are thus developed. The intellect enters the playground, whereupon play touches æsthetics, and a new element is introduced.

It was not long after the founding of the first playgrounds that the builders thought it wise to make them as agreeable to the eye as possible. It may have been that the folk dances were made part of the programme for the sake of the girls, but it seems more likely that they developed naturally from singing

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and dancing games, dear to childhood since the beginning of time. Rhythm is an important factor in play. "Dressing-up", even in a kerchief and apron, is fun. The dance can be exhibited to parents at the end of the season, reacting pleasantly on the life of the playground, as well as on the child, by linking it with the home interests. Dances are at first isolated; then they are strung together in groups, in order that they may have coherence for their final performance. Have we not thus prepared the way for the more complex arts of the theatre?

The playground originated for the purpose of furthering physical health; but not long after it was discovered that physical and mental well-being cannot be separated. From disorganized material, the iron swings made of gas-pipe and a teeter with one vacant end high in the air, there has been a steady growth to the May party whose chanting chorus merrily salutes a flower-bedecked and laughing queen. The child who spent his playtime in the sand heap comes again to the playground for diversion when he is older: unconsciously he slips

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from one stage of development to another; when he outgrows the isolated digging in the sand he joins group games, he becomes — as Mr. Joseph Lee phrases it — “an Injun” following the leader of the team; he submits to discipline until he is a trained member of the playground community. Upon reaching this more purely mental point, he realizes that he is no longer a child but that under the veil of a cultivated taste has retained all the child’s desire to play. He wishes an intellectual and emotional outlet in his playtime, a demand which has been answered in many playgrounds over the country by the establishment of an annual pageant in which old and young take part.

The pageant is the most flexible form of dramatic expression. It is a loose-jointed member of the Theatre Family, and an adept at contortions. Since Mr. Louis Parker’s revival of the form in England, it has been customary to make the pageant round the history of some locality, conferring a measure of coherence upon the whole by devices like the chorus of monks who chanted at intervals

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during the Pageant of Saint Albans. It will be understood that this flexible formula bends comfortably to the needs of the playground director. Holidays local or national may be made memorable by its adoption: Independence Day or the birthday of Daniel Boone may be made real to the children. High lights appear upon the solid color of the routine; children and parents are interested; the whole is knit together into a new vitality.

Apart from the playground, the pageant has had a great development in America, but before tracing that growth in any detail, let us look at certain other indications of the same spirit. There are village celebrations on the Fourth of July, with a common set of fireworks and diversions. I have heard a whole village sing familiar hymns in the town hall on a summer Sunday in a little Maine town: I have joined the crowd round Mr. Harry Barnhardt and lifted my voice with the others who a moment before were, like me, mere passers-by. During the last decade many towns have adopted the practice of lighting a Christmas tree out of doors in some conspicuous place.

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No one who has wandered up Beacon Hill from the crowded Church of the Advent, to listen again to the clear voices of the carollers outside Saint Margaret's, will ever forget the joy of the soft snow under his feet, and the tingle of the Christmas air. The illuminated windows of every house on the hill are a spoken welcome. And when, after lustily singing on the Common round the blazing tree, the friendly crowd pauses to hear trumpeters announcing Christmas Day from the porch of Saint Paul's Cathedral, the feeling of community enjoyment is complete. In New York, the Christmas tree in Madison Square was accompanied, in 1915, by the performance of a Christmas pantomime (of which pictures are given in these pages) by Mr. Stewart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, erected there for that purpose. The five thousand spectators stood as entranced in the snow as if they had been sitting in the luxury of an enticing Little Theatre!

But because of its peculiarly adaptable nature, the pageant has manifested more than any other phenomena the desire of the community for unity and expression. Pageants



Photo by White Studio.

### THE SEVEN GIFTS

Courtesy of the Portmanteau Theatre.

Played in Madison Square, before five thousand people, on Christmas Eve.



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have existed always: to discover the first we must pass into the time when history was unrecorded. Any event presented an excuse. During the Middle Ages, these spectacles became elaborate and usual. The entry of royalty into a city, a birth, a christening, a betrothal or marriage, the return of a victorious army, or the birthday of a favorite, might be celebrated by the disporting of the populace. In the history of France and of England the outlines of many colorful pageants are preserved, with plates representing the richness of the costumes and elaborate descriptions of the gorgeous trappings. The whole city, young, old, tradespeople, nobles, and paupers, joined in these revels: the aim was to let every one share the common emotion.

Nor is the aim of the modern pageant different, but it has added a corollary: the new pageant strives to unite the body politic by means of the celebration of its general joy. The Master of the Revels, the Lord of Misrule, has been superseded by a new master, who with the functions of his forerunner has combined the ambition of the statesman. His pageant



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celebrates a day of public rejoicing, fitly and beautifully, but at the same time it must quicken the community consciousness, it must revive fellowship and the common ambitions of the component parts.

The history of the pageant as an art form in America actually goes back to the beginnings of the oldest colony: the Merry Mount Revels appeared in 1627. But although there were sporadic instances during the first two hundred years of our growth (in the Revolutionary War British soldiers gave a pageant in Philadelphia), the first use of the name, and the earliest celebration in the form by which we characterize our pageants was in Marietta, Ohio. In 1888 this romantic town was the scene of a pageant, actually called by the name, in which incidents from its own vivid history were represented. However, the development of the pageant did not steadily follow the initiative of Marietta. It was not until after Mr. Parker's brilliant successes in England — Sherborne, Winchester, Oxford, and Bury St. Edmunds — that the enthusiasm on this side of the Atlantic was strong enough to make pageants numerous.

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As the number of pageants increased in our cities, the form became in a measure localized. The pageants of the revival of pageantry, set in motion when Mr. Parker in England created the Pageant of Sherborne, were, as I have said, loosely connected series of historical scenes. There was usually some allegorical symbolical figure or chorus by which they were joined, but this device had little value in itself. When, on the other hand, pageantry became a frequent adventure of the American people, the symbolical element was magnified. In Mr. Parker's pageants there is a glorification of the past: in Mr. MacKaye's pageant-masque there is a promise for the future through the reviewing of the past. No doubt the Puritan blood which flows so strongly in the veins of America has some part in this tendency: it may also be caused by the fact that we are accustomed to think of ourselves as a nation with a future rather than a past; but the desire of the makers of the new pageant to knit the community into a better whole by means of it is also a fundamental reason. Whatever causes and forces have contributed

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to this result, the symbolical character of the American pageant is its most vital factor, and from the symbolical pageant we have developed a new form, the pageant-masque.

From the year 1911, the list of pageants grows increasingly varied; large and small towns vie for first place in enthusiasm; towns and cities represented spread from California to Massachusetts: no occasion seems to be neglected. The Peterborough Pageant in memory of Edward MacDowell, the Gloucester Pageant, the Pageant of Wisconsin, the Pageant of the Northwest — one treads upon the heels of the other. But the Municipal Pageant of St. Louis in 1914 has in a measure established a valuable precedent, because its proportions were so huge and impressive.

The Pageant and Masque of St. Louis has been published, but to the student of the sociological theatre the report of committees compiled after the production is even more interesting. This brief pamphlet is a pæan of praise. To read it is like listening to festival music; voice follows voice in lifting strain after strain of joy, and the solos are supported

by a chorus of thousands — the citizens who made the celebration a success. The bare statement of work accomplished is a revelation of what demands the venture made: no channel of usefulness was left untapped: every thread of service was gladly woven into the web. But behind the setting down of facts there is the same spirit in the reports made by those committee chairmen that was clear in the reading of the masque and the pageant — the spirit of service, the spirit of fellowship, the spirit of brotherhood.

Other cities have accepted the challenge of St. Louis; last season New York, and Newark, New Jersey, made use of the community pageant and masque. Already the banner is going forward. The spirit of neighborliness which gathered city children into playgrounds has flourished there, and the breath of brotherhood is blowing across the land.

## CHAPTER III

### SOCIOLOGICAL THEATRE: CALIBAN

*Caliban by the Yellow Sands*, Mr. MacKaye's masque in honor of the three hundredth anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare, was presented in the City of New York in 1916. It was far more ambitious than any previous civic attempt, for New York is of all cities the most complex, the most varied in population, the most volatile: to unite her shifting thousands into even a momentary unity seems beyond belief or imagination. But the introduction of the new art form to the great city was a strategical masterstroke. In this country no work of art may hope for acceptance as long as it lacks the stamp of metropolitan genuineness. If New York has seen it, the others will see it. Had New York withheld her attention, no heights of technical finesse could have made up for the loss. Therefore

it demands especial attention in the steady advance of the community theatre.

But *Caliban* has other claims to importance beside the accident that New York witnessed its birth: *Caliban* is interesting in itself, as an exponent of the new form of dramatic expression which Democracy is hewing from the rock of her people. This form is in its infancy. We cannot say to what lengths the pageant-masque may go. *Caliban* was groping. In the art of the theatre a new technique of expression cannot be molded behind the curtains and flashed upon the stage fully finished: to do this would be to reckon without the audience. The artists of the theatre must submit their "rough drafts" to the good will of the audience, must watch the feelings of the audience with beating heart, and must remodel until the summit of perfection is reached.

The great size of the Shakespeare masque (its popular name) makes it unusually valuable as an example; every proportion is magnified, and its beauties and blemishes alike are more clearly revealed.

New York flung herself with an enthusiasm

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amounting almost to passion into the celebrating of Shakespeare's anniversary. The idea arose from the annual meeting of the Drama League of America, and the local centre of the Drama League in New York was responsible for the appointment of a committee to manage the celebration in that city. With the assistance of prominent people (his Honor the Mayor made it official), a great campaign was started to have the three hundredth year since Shakespeare's death memorable for proofs of the vitality of his work. His deathlessness was to be attested by great and small, professional and amateur productions of his plays; discussions of every question connected with his life and writing were to be encouraged; the series of lectures and readings were endless. Finally, as a climax, a great out-of-door festival was to be given, celebrating in as fit a fashion as possible the debt which we owe through life and art to the master-dramatist.

It was an amazing conception. And the complexity of the committee's organization is staggering. It far outreaches the work of that triumphant pageant committee in St.



DETAIL OF A SCENE FROM CALIBAN, BY PERCY MACKAYE

Setting by Robert Edmond Jones. The use of the mask was revived with eminent success.





Louis. Public schools, private schools, churches, recreation centres, parks, colleges, clubs, libraries, and the profession of the theatre were enlisted. The limits to which coöperation can be carried seem to have been reached when we hear of the sick children in Bellevue Hospital learning Ariel's song from the *Tempest*, and sitting propped against pillows in their little beds to sew a pasted Shakespeare picture book!

The final celebration, the culmination of all these thousands of minor festivities, was to be one which united all the arts of the theatre, and it was with this aim in view that Mr. Mac-Kaye wrote *Caliban* for the occasion. In order to understand wherein the masque fell below and wherein it far surpassed the hopes of its originators, let us look for a moment at the outline as it was published in the official programme.

### *Description of the Masque*

#### ACTION

The action takes place, symbolically, on three planes:

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[1] In the cave of Setebos [before and after its transformation into the theatre of Prospero];

[2] In the mind of Prospero [behind the Cloudy Curtains of the Inner Stage]; and

[3] On the ground-circle of "the Yellow Sands" [the place of historic time].

### TIME

The Masque Proper is concerned, symbolically, with no definite period of time, but with the waxing and waning of the life of Dramatic Art from primitive barbaric times to the verge of the living present.

The interludes are concerned with ritualistic glimpses of the art of the theatre during three historical periods: [1] Antiquity, [2] the Middle Ages, and [3] Elizabethan England.

The Epilogue is concerned with the creative forces of dramatic art from antiquity to the present, and — by suggestion — with the future of those forces.

### SETTING

The setting of the Masque is not a background of natural landscape as in the case of most outdoor pageants, but is architectural and scenic. Being constructed technically for performance on a large scale, by night only, its basic appeals are to the eye, through expert illusions of light and darkness, architectural and plastic line, the dance, color, and pageantry

of group movements; to the ear, through invisible choirs, orchestral and instrumental music.

The Masque Proper is enacted by professional actors, who, by their speech, give the motives of the large scale pantomime in the Interludes.

The Interludes unfold the theme in dances, pageantry, choruses and pantomime, by hundreds of community performers. In the Epilogue the professional actors and the numerous community performers unite.

Corresponding to this Inner Structure is the Outer Structure, which consists of three stages:

[1] A modified form of Elizabethan stage, here called the Middle Stage, which is a raised platform, and to which steps lead from the Ground Circle.

[2] The Inner Stage, shut off from the Middle Stage by Cloudy Curtains, which, when drawn, reveal the Inner Shakespearean Scenes conceived in the mind of Prospero.

[3] The Ground Circle, between the Middle Stage and the Audience, resembling in form the "Orchestra" of a Greek theatre.

Beneath the Middle Stage, and between the Steps which lead up to it from the Ground Circle, is situated, at centre, the mouth of Caliban's cell, which thus opens directly upon the Yellow Sands.

All of these features of the setting, however, are invisible when the Masque begins, and are

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only revealed as the lightings of the action disclose them.

### *Synopsis of Masque*

#### GENERAL THEME

The four principal characters of the Masque, Caliban, Ariel, Miranda, and Prospero, are derived from those of Shakespeare's play "The Tempest." Through these characters the general theme is developed.

The theme of the Masque is the slow education of mankind through the influences of coöperative art, that is, of the theatre in its full social scope.

This theme of coöperation is expressed earliest in the Masque through the lyric of Ariel's spirits,

"Come unto these Yellow Sands  
And then take hands."

It is sounded with central stress, in the chorus of peace, when the Kings clasp hands on the Field of the Cloth of Gold; and with final emphasis in the gathering together of the creative forces of dramatic art in the Epilogue and the final speech of Caliban to the spirit of Shakespeare.

Space in which to trace the many incidents of the action fails in so brief a review; the reader who wishes to follow the education of

the brute may seek the published version of the masque. It will well repay his attention. There is in the reading a unity of effect which was lost in the huge proportions of the production: the reader becomes Caliban, learning from the colorful pageant of the author's imaging how, throughout ages of time, the arts of the theatre have shown that man is spirit. "We are such stuff as dreams are made on —"

The education of mankind, in Mr. MacKaye's conception, is twofold, consisting both in the inspiration which comes through the minds of poets and dreamer-artists, and in growth under the action of coöperation. Caliban, the brute part of man, is taught by the spirit which is the servant of the artist; he sees a vision, he strives to realize what he sees, and then again is shown another vision, rousing him to new effort and new achievement. So far all is clear: the scenes from Shakespeare, illustrating the flashes of vision through the artist, were conjured up for Caliban and, one after the other, showed a definite effect upon him; the pageant of history, passing in the great central ring of the amphitheatre — the arts

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of the theatre in the broad sense including song and dance — swept by to show how men had played together. Caliban crept on his belly, then stood tottering erect, and learned to walk like a man: Lust, War, and Death were overcome one by one, and Time rose to promise more than had been accomplished. But in spite of the beauty and the grandeur of the production, as it was given in the circle of the Stadium of the College of the City of New York, I found it not as satisfying as the reading had been, and far less complete than the jumbled rehearsal which it had been my privilege to witness several nights before the first performance.

The causes of this imperfection are so closely associated with the audience, and are so important in a social as well as an artistic sense, that, far from being out of place in the discussion, they are necessary to our argument. For instance, the great audience was in itself a keen disappointment. It lacked the concentration and coherence which is the most impressive quality in a crowd which fills a great stadium for a football game: it was ill

at ease, nervous, restless, self-conscious, curious, thoughtless, and diffuse. Only a small fraction of the thousands who flocked into the oval of seats had even seen a stadium filled with people: the vastness of the assembly, the amazing rapidity with which things happened, the mysterious sensation of listening to voices which came from a block away — all these new experiences created a strangeness which called for some great unifying emotion to weld the thousand wandering minds into one mind. One such moment did come near the middle of the action, a moment which stood out above all others as the fiery cross, which symbolized it, flamed out above every other scenic effect.

Caliban, from howling brutishly on his belly, had been raised to the dignity of wearing the trappings of art, through the teaching of his master. Full of confidence, he grasped the magic wand, himself to conjure up a vision. At first he was successful; then, moved by the vision of Brutus to a memory of what he had seen in the revels of Caligula, he lifted his wand and voice, and brutish once more, sum-



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moned the forces of Lust, the servant of his ancient god and father. They flocked in from the shadows where the old god's priests were lurking, up from the grass and from the golden sands of Time, and overran the masque stage, the Temple of Art, in a glorious sordid rush. The defenders of art crouched helpless against the pillars of the defiled temple; it seemed that the Spirit of Beauty, the daughter of the artist, would be torn from her shrine and defiled. Then, to the sound of trumpets triumphant, flashed against the sky the Cross, and in the inner stage, where things of the mind were revealed, appeared the vision of Saint Agnes and her lamb, and A Shepherd, who proved to be the Master-Artist himself.

It was a great moment; without exception opinion has judged it the greatest, I think. The reason is fundamental and of the most vital importance. At this instant there was one centre of action, not three, as there were even when only one centre of action was being used, and the movement shifted among them. For the most part, the spoken word of the masque was concentrated upon the great masque

stage, the pageant of Time swept by in the great yellow circle, and the flashes of Shakespeare were shown by the opening of curtains at the very back of all. But, at the point of which I speak, the vision of the artist stirred the brute to action; he in turn roused the mob into actual participation in the masque-movement, destructive but still action — to be stilled once more by the flash of an inspiration, pictured in the area sacred to mind. And this clash, bringing the most unified and the most emotional moment of the masque, gave the audience its biggest thrill, a fact which points clearly to the one weakness of the conception and stage management.

The whole fundamental idea in *Caliban*, just like the fundamental conception of a community theatre, is the value in education and growth, not only of seeing, but of feeling and of doing. Mankind, stirred by imagination through the inspiration of a seer, acts, and so learns. So Caliban should not merely have watched the pageant of Time, as it passed before him, at the word of the artist. The visions of the artist were the flashes of spirit

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which reached even his sordidness, but the action on the sands of time — the Egyptians writhing in religious ecstasy, the Greeks rejoicing in the joy of perfect physical beauty, and the Romans flinging the pearls of art before the swine of low desires, all these were not pictures thrown upon a screen for Caliban to watch. *They were Caliban.* Caliban, worshipping the gods of ancient Egypt with dance and rhythmic motion, Caliban reaching summits of art, but with his feet still the feet of a monster, and finally, Caliban succumbing to the old monstrous strength and weakness. We could have wished to see him thus clothed in the garments of Time, and “taking hands, upon these yellow sands.” In this way the continuity, which is so evident in reading Mr. MacKaye’s play, would have been apparent in the mammoth production.

Curiously enough, the rehearsal — disjointed, disorganized, fragmentary, and unfinished — gave a feeling of unity that the performance failed to give. The memory of it will linger long in my mind as the exponent of the Masque Idea.

Dusk was falling over the Stadium of the College of the City of New York. The horseshoe of seats, curiously knit together of wood and cement, was empty, suggesting for the moment some dream of antiquity, some reminiscence of the Roman amphitheatre awaiting the spectacle of lions or of gladiators. From the flat end, where a stage had been built, the hoarse shouts of the master-carpenter rose over the hollow beats of a hammer. The great face of Setebos, a painted horror, still wet, grinned up at groups of boys and girls who began to straggle in through the narrow stage entrances to the grass ring in the centre. Over in one corner an energetic game of baseball proved that this was not the Roman Empire, but the United States of America.

Behind the stage there was bustle, but little confusion. Tickets were given out by assistants, and a line had formed before a window marked "Costumes", while in the dressing-rooms activity was beginning, and the First Aid tent awaited patronage.

With the coming of darkness the continually augmented groups were drawn into a solid whole.

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Each group formed a quiet audience to the performances of the others, waiting with extraordinary patience for the call which mobilized their "turn." The services of the brisk ushers were rarely needed to quiet disturbance or to hush talking. Through a megaphone the director from a platform encouraged, harangued, and exhorted the hundreds of actors who were taking part in the interludes.

A rehearsal, even a complete rehearsal, is curiously lacking in proportion and in emphasis. But here was a rehearsal only half costumed, in which episodes followed each other without attempt at logic. Now youths in Greek tunics swept across the field, half revealed in the dim light, swaying and moving like some animation of an old frieze. They were followed, in comical contrast, by a man in a well-cut overcoat and derby hat, who rode in a chariot of exotic design, drawn by half-naked slaves, and balancing across his knee a Roman dancing maiden whose companions ran after the procession with little cries. Then, with a sudden change, they were gone, and the field was flooded with new figures. They moved

steadily, slowly, with increasing precision to the jiggling strains of the Tideswell Morris Dance: they came on and on until there seemed to be no end. These were Shakespeare's own merry-makers, come to set up the Maypole of Jollity on the shores of our Puritan land. And, as if recognizing their importance, the quiet watchers in the shadows burst into applause which echoed through the spaces of the great stadium like a prophecy.

Meanwhile, — unaware of the presence of any one else, — the persons of the masque proper were busy with their lines and action upon the nearly finished stage. Over the whole, the electrician sent flashes of magical light, and the chorus, invisible above the stage, sometimes accompanied the action, and sometimes wandered away at its own sweet will.

From every reasonable point of view, the effect should have been a hodgepodge. And to the tired workers who had been struggling so long to make a coherent whole, it no doubt seemed a nightmare. For weeks many of them had sacrificed their evenings, coming to rehearsals under difficulties, and returning

wearily to beds from which the ordinary business of the day would call them promptly the next morning. The work was done not easily, but with an effort, and because of the sacrifice and difficulty which they represented, the pictures were strung one after the other upon the spirit of fellowship as beads hang upon a silken thread. Underneath and through the medley throbbed the inspiration of a great coöperative feeling.

There was a friendly neighborliness about the entire gathering which seemed as out of place in New York as a baby carriage in Times Square. Nothing pleasant and friendly was surprising. A slim lady in Egyptian draperies was accosted in the shadowy region behind the scenes by an Elizabethan maiden who proved to be a college classmate. Not even the slightest greeting passed between them, merely a brisk, casual question and answer. "Oh, Ann," cried the newcomer, "have you seen Marjorie Trump?" "Not since Class day!" was the calm reply. "I am sorry." And the Egyptian lady passed into her dressing room without realizing that it had been

an equal length of time since she greeted her questioner!

Even more unusual perhaps was the country-town joviality which prevailed among the audience. Those thousands had a genuine interest, and a curiosity which was far from idle. The friendly flock on the Broadway car which carried me northward might have been migrating toward the circus on an annual outing. They were chatty. They laughed at the lack of seats, even at the lack of standing room. Every one felt that this was a holiday, for his neighbor as well as for himself. But chief of them all was the genial conductor. He begged the packed passengers to "step up forward", with patently false promises of "more room up front." He argued that by stepping forward they would be that much nearer "the show." He crowded in dozens where there should have been two or three; he threatened, coaxed, and wheedled until the car was shaken with quick ripples of laughter. At every stop he called with genial deference to warn a crushed little woman huddled against the door, "Are ye ready, lady dear?" in order that she



might not drop out as the door opened. In leaving, I expressed the desire that the conductor might be going with us all. He shook his gray head vigorously. "Sure," he answered blithely, with a smile which would have delighted the organizers of the masque could they have seen it, "who would bring them all up here, if I went gallivantin'?"

Then too, the bus which carried me away from the spectacle was filled with people who were talking of *Caliban*. Some were pleased, others unmoved, and one or two frankly puzzled; but they were all eager to discuss what they had seen. "Can you tell me what it was all about?" one woman anxiously asked me. I handed her a programme instead of answering, pointing to certain lines; whereupon, above the noise of the jolting, she read the synopsis of the action aloud, and we all listened.

However, the faults of this greatest community festival which we have attempted are less important than the promise which it carried of progress to better and greater achievement. The technique of the spectacle-drama will change; the fundamental conception will not

often, I think, be as purely intellectual as the one which was destined to do honor to Shakespeare. Thus the audience will become accustomed to thinking of itself in the large terms necessary under the arch of heaven and the stars. But surely the drama of the community will become not an occasional occurrence, not a sporadic growth, but a national institution. *Caliban* has opened the door into an unexplored garden, rich with no one knows what fruits. The community masque is one of the many signs which point indisputably to the establishment of a community theatre, for the community masque has proved valuable in bringing out temporarily the qualities in the community which we seek, by means of the community theatre, to establish permanently. The joy of play, the joy of co-operation, the expression of joy through art, the pleasure of creation, the unifying force of a common interest, all were evident in the masque. In a community theatre they would be continued instead of lapsing at the end of one artistic blooming. The masque is the apple tree which flowers in the spring; the theatre is like the orange, rich perpetually in blooms and in fruit!

## CHAPTER IV

### LITTLE THEATRES

WHAT is often called "The Little Theatre Movement" is vigorous in this country, although it is young. Because it covers a short period of time, and because it is less a definite *movement* than a number of sporadic and independent protests against an existing condition which grope toward a common goal still vague — for all these reasons, generalizations about the Little Theatre are apt to prove premature judgments. However, it may safely be asserted that the enthusiasm for small theatres independent of the organization which we call "the commercial theatre" is like the spirit which initiates the pageant and the community masque, evidence of the awakening of the American audience to active participation in the art of the theatre. In certain places interest in the dramatic expression of common emotion

has taken the form of the pageant or the pageant-masque. In others the emotion has been confined to a smaller space and fewer people, and the results have lasted a longer time by means of some locally organized theatrical enterprise. Each is a definite step toward the establishment of the institution to be the ultimate fulfilment of both desires — the community theatre.

To trace the history of the Little Theatre from its beginnings on the continent, fascinating as it would be, is not my purpose here. Just what social and artistic influences have been brought to bear on, let us say, the Prairie Playhouse of Galesburg, Illinois, by such theatres as Antoine's and Reinhardt's, or by the New Free Folk Stage in Berlin (to which several managements refer with admiration) would be an interesting problem, but one which would prove, I think, insoluble. The history of the Little Theatre is unimportant as yet; we must think of the future and the present rather than of the past.

For convenience I have placed in the Appendix a list of the Little Theatres of America. It is as complete as possible. At this time of expansion, the list must necessarily fail to

include some of the newest ventures; no doubt since the compilation fresh Little Theatres have come into being, and it may be that valuable but unadvertised efforts have escaped my notice. Most fervently do I hope so, for it is from these simple, unsophisticated places that the theatre will draw most strength. However, such examples as have come to my hand fall naturally into two classes: just as the theatre has been divided by the footlights into artists and audience, so the new theatres have had their origin upon one side or the other of that same line; on the one hand there are organizations which owe their existence to the inspiration of some artist, and on the other there are those which came from a social need visualized by an outstanding figure or figures in the audience or social body. These two classes might be called the Art Theatres and the Economic Theatres in order that they may be distinguished.

Of the first type I shall speak briefly. They have been largely a reflection of the new art of the theatre as it was known in France, in Germany, and in Russia. They are half-measures. But they are not for that reason to be in the least

condemned; rather they are to be encouraged and commended, not because "half-a-loaf is better than no bread", but because as half-measures they are a long step toward the thing for which we are struggling. It is a bright prognostication that when we look for instances of spontaneous and apparently isolated attempts to bring something fresh and lovely into the theatre, we find many shrines with ardent worshippers. There is a Little Theatre in Baltimore and one in Los Angeles; Louisville, Kentucky, has one, and so has a tiny settlement at Blue Hill, Maine. As far as it is possible to tell, the beginnings have been practically contemporaneous. The difference of a few months in the dates of founding may be disregarded.

But, in spite of a class similarity, there is great variety in the details of the organization of these Little Theatres. Many of the associations are limited by the size of their place of production to a narrow list of subscribers, who make up the small audience and whose annual subscriptions furnish funds for the productions. Casts for such theatres seem usually to be either professional actors or talented amateurs who

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come from without as well as within the corporate body. Such a theatre was The Toy of Boston, when it flourished in Mrs. Gale's erstwhile stable in Lime Street. The Vagabond Players suffer a similar limitation in their little converted barroom, of which a photograph is included in this volume. If the playhouse holds only sixty-two persons, the clientele cannot be too varied !

Artistically, the very smallness of our Little Playhouses has produced surprisingly big results. The Little Theatres have influenced the arts of the theatre — the arts of scene-painting and of acting, especially — much more than we realize. Nothing could be as convincing an argument for simplicity as the intimacy of a tiny theatre; the scene must be cleared of too much detail and clutter, and the action must be restrained and perfectly simple. Mr. Livingston Platt, from The Toy Theatre, Mr. Raymond Johnson, from The Chicago Little Theatre, Mr. Frank Zimmerer, whose early work was done in settlement houses, are names of weight even in professional circles : they have been trained in a hard school where distance must be a matter

of perspective, illusion, and light, and they learned to make magic from that training. Whatever may be said about freeing art from the bonds of convention, it is conceded, I believe, that limitations serve as a goad to an artist in his apprenticeship. And the narrow proscenium, the lack of space, the closeness of the audience, all call for skill and ingenuity which the harassed worker seldom appreciates at the moment of the struggle. The acting too has been simplified, and the actor has often been given opportunities of experiment and variety in his interpretation which the methods of our professional theatre forbid.

But what was fortunate in the artistic light has been unlucky from the social angle. Instead of *social* theatres, we have had *society* theatres, a wholly different matter. Naturally, the fostering group, in many cases, has been the group which has leisure, and that group is the one which is most sophisticated, most influenced by the tradition of the old theatre and of the old world, the one which has least need of an outlet for emotion, and which does not suffer from the lack of beauty. Not long ago in a small city



rich in tradition and in history, far removed from the centres of artistic life, and teeming with youth and enthusiasm, certain intelligent people were discussing an entertainment to accompany the municipal Christmas tree. The most eager of them all — the arbiter eligantiarum — shook her head regretfully. "We could not do it," she said, with discouragement in her face and voice, "it is too difficult to persuade the young people to take part even in a small performance. If we want financial support, we must have people in our plays who can bring their families, and debutantes have so many parties that they are bored by the suggestion." And instantly there came to my mind the story told by Mrs. Henniger of a little girl who was backward in her class at school, shy, ill at ease, and seemingly stupid, until she was put into a cast of *The Little Princess*. There she was one of the children at the "party." As rehearsals progressed, her shyness vanished. The little girls were encouraged to work out each her own individual action, and the little shy one, who could not dance, wept bitterly for fear she might be sent away. But when she was told that she

could think of something to do herself, her little brain scurried about, and she triumphantly suggested that she might turn the leaves of the music for the girl who played the piano! The fact that she was "promoted" that term in school may not have helped the door receipts of *The Little Princess*, but it certainly had a value. And what a contrast she offers to the debutantes who are so busy with parties that they have no time for a thing of beauty! Surely there is no limitation so rigid and unyielding as the barrier set up by "Society." To make the Little Theatre unfailingly useful, it must be freed from that bond.

Another type of the Art Little Theatre which has contributed not a little to our art of the theatre is that which is subsidized by a patron, such as The Los Angeles Little Theatre, and The Lake Forest Players, and several tiny summer theatres in the villages of New England. Most of these have a purely local importance, I think, and therefore do not call for especial attention here. But one which flourishes under a benevolent despotism has made itself so noticed that we must pause and examine it in

some detail — I mean The Neighborhood Playhouse in New York.

The Neighborhood Playhouse, in a city full of theatres, far away in a quiet corner, on the pitiful, promise-blessed East Side of the great city, has made more than one commercial producer squirm under the glare of his spotlight. Unlike many or most of the Little Theatres in our country, it has a deep root in so fundamental a thing as race: in its purely *neighborhood* manifestation, it gives exquisite expression to the beauty sleeping in the mind of the long silenced Jewish people. The neighborhood of which the theatre is the mouthpiece is the crowded and stifled one which huddles round the Nurses' Settlement in Henry Street. For years the work in dramatic classes has been laying a foundation upon which the beauty of The Neighborhood Playhouse has been based. The art classes, the sewing classes, and other branches of the Settlement have made contributions. The generous founders are young women who give not only a liberal endowment of money but of taste and imagination as well, besides strenuous, continued, mental and physi-



Photo by Slevin. Courtesy of Forest Theatre.

# **AN OUTDOOR PLAY AT CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA, CALIFORNIA**



cal labor. They desire ardently that the theatre express all that is fine in the ancient and modern life of the people. Beautiful old Jewish rituals have been revived, bright with color and swinging with the joyful motion of the East, to take a place beside much that is excellent in modern dramatic writing. An occasional play has been given in Yiddish. The settings are unfailingly interesting and often very beautiful. The personnel of the cast is prevaillingly of the neighborhood, and although top hats do appear there, the audience is chiefly drawn from the Lower East Side.

A performance in The Neighborhood Playhouse is never stupid to the student. It may be an interesting experiment, and often it is an achievement of definite artistic value. But the general policy of the playhouse is the Settlement policy. Unusual artistic fare is provided for the community under the leadership of women of high ideals, but that fare is, after all, *given*. The underlying spirit of the place is a benevolent one: the people work together, they give expression to emotions of their race, but they are never free. It may be that the need,

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in the situation in which The Neighborhood Playhouse finds itself, is for such an educational and protective organization. The young people of Grand Street are part of New York, and many of them are totally unfit for the life of that city. It is not my intention to criticize the evident good which has been accomplished by Settlements in great cities, but their policy is acknowledged to be one of expediency. They are the First Aid class of Social Science. They put the injured member into a splint, but do not set it. After the First Aider must come one who will make it possible for Nature to finish the work of healing! So the force of humanity is always making achievement, under the guidance of some great constructor who leads without directing. To return to our special instance, The Neighborhood Theatre will realize the ideal of a community theatre only when it becomes a self-governing body. Until that time it may do excellent work, but it is not providing for its own future. And although this change would mean a temporary lowering of the artistic level which it undoubtedly has set for itself, it would substitute an ever broadening horizon.

Still a third division are those theatres which have taken impetus from the success in England and on the Continent, of playhouses with a municipal endowment. At Northampton one has continued for several years to furnish entertainment for the undergraduates and faculty of Smith College as well as for the inhabitants of the Massachusetts manufacturing town: and in Pittsfield another with a similar endowment — the shares are owned by wealthy citizens — is equally successful. These theatres are, of course, professional, and they take their keynote from Broadway, slightly tinged with popular intellectualism. They often do good work, and express in a certain measure the tastes of the audience, but they are not the possession of the audience as the community theatre should be the possession of the community.

Several attempts have been made to establish repertory theatres in this country. The New Theatre in New York combined with a repertory idea the general aim of the theatre of the community magnified to national terms. The explosion of the notion that a national theatre could be superimposed, which came with the



failure of The New Theatre, was the contribution of that organization to the history of the theatre. Later, in Boston, a repertory attempt was made under the title of the Henry Jewett Players, but the organization as it now exists is on the basis of a stock rather than of a repertory company. Finally, in New York once more, Miss Grace George made a considerable degree of success with one season of repertory at The Playhouse in Forty-eighth Street, and it is to be regretted that it has not been continued. But the repertory theatre — whatever opportunities it may offer to artists of the theatre — is not the final goal when it is unconnected with the community. And the municipal theatre, financed by a few shareholders for the benefit of a town or city, is not completely enough of the community to satisfy the most pressing demands.

Here and there are theatres which call themselves experimental. One of the earliest of these was Professor Baker's "47 Workshop" which — taking its numerical name from "English 47, — Technique of the Drama", as listed in the catalogue of Harvard University — was established to provide a dramatic laboratory

for the students of Professor Baker's well-known course. There in the insufficient theatre of Radcliffe College, the plays which are being written under Professor Baker's guidance are given a hearing to an audience composed of interested people whose written criticisms are a valuable part of the routine. Here everything is for the benefit of the author, or, as Professor Baker himself writes: "What I should like to have particularly emphasized is that the 47 Workshop is not simply a place for the trying-out of our plays, but that it is a place where anybody who has anything to offer in the theatrical arts may have a hearing. We have at present new and promising people at work on theatrical design and costumes, training in acting, and in all the departments behind the curtain. We have recently established a Bookshop on the evenings of the performances, at which any published plays of the Harvard Dramatic Club or the 47 Workshop may be had."

This workshop idea of Professor Baker's has been developed by one of his pupils in a most interesting way at the University of North Dakota. Professor Frederick Koch went out from Har-

ward to a field which is infinitely richer in dramatic promise because it is nearer to a simple and unsophisticated manner of living, and he has with great wisdom clung as closely as he has been able to the life of his prairie workmen. So vigorous is the work of the Sock and Buskin Society upon which the producing of plays falls, that Professor Koch is able to write, "In these few years it has been demonstrated to us that practically the first generation of Americans from the soil, from our prairie pioneers, can translate its own thrilling life into new dramatic and literary forms — convincing and beautiful, and promising much toward a genuinely native art yet to come."

Perhaps the most interesting of all Professor Koch's innovations, however, are the coöperative pageants which he has produced upon his lovely outdoor stage. These were the work not of one man but of a class of twenty, working in close and eager consultation, and yet they read most convincingly. The celebration of the Shakespeare Tercentenary was the occasion for a pageant-masque in which the Master Playwright was shown influenced by the strange

news of far-away America, thus tying North Dakota to the days of good Queen Bess — as was fitting and proper. Here is a community laboratory : here is a lesson for universities, and a great lesson for the community theatre when it shall find itself in action.

The West, because it lacks so many possessions of the East, is bound to have many things for which the East may not hope. A rural theatre is one of these, where plays are produced for the country folk, and which is in a measure a strolling players' group. This too is in North Dakota, and it is under the management of Mr. Arvold and the Agricultural College in Fargo. I shall say more of the universities of the West in a future chapter.

The rural theatre, rich with promise of joy and life for the isolated farm dweller, brings me naturally in my review of the many Little Theatres to The Portmanteau Theatre of Stuart Walker. Here is a true revival of the strolling players ! Mr. Walker's stage packs up in boxes, and his lovely scenes and magic lighting are sent about the country, if not by parcel post, by a method as expeditious. It is a new form of

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theatre which had its origin strictly within the professional theatre, for Mr. Walker had a long training under as conservative a master as Mr. Belasco, but it has in its fresh youth and enthusiasm little of the faults of the theatrical profession as we know it to-day. And although it is far removed from any community — it is the “Theatre without a home” always “on the branch” — it has a very poignant message for the community theatre.

First of all, The Portmanteau Theatre has shown what can be done with little money and some care and brain—as no other one theatrical enterprise has done. And in the second place it has cut loose from much of the paraphernalia which has been considered an integral part of theatrical production, and has made the simple playing of delightful plays as possible in a barn as on Broadway. Just what the ultimate development of Mr. Walker’s invention may be it is not possible to say, but when the community theatre becomes a reality it will undoubtedly find The Portmanteau Theatre—or theatres—its close ally.

In the brief examination given the Art



Photo by White Studio. Courtesy of Portmanteau Theatre.

#### GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

The vigor and vitality of the old comedy emphasized by the whimsy of the set.



Theatres, one or two instances have been touched upon which might well come under the Economic Theatre as well. The Neighborhood Playhouse is one of these, and Professor Frederick Koch's Laboratory in the Bankside Theatre at the University of North Dakota is another. There are many settlement houses where the Dramatic Club might well be given the dignity of the title Theatre, but they are too numerous to require more than mention as a class. One of them, the Hull House organization, which grew up from Miss Addams' inspiration at Oberammergau, stands out above the others because of its age and its achievement; it has had the honor of producing for the first time many plays of a serious, and more especially, of a sociological nature — Galsworthy's *Justice* was one.



## CHAPTER V

### DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

THE nature of democracy makes it very difficult to judge the institutions of democracy, and to allot to each the measure of praise or of blame which is its due. Other forms of national organization have an immediate attainment which constitutes success, and without it they are failures. It is simple, in history, to trace the criterion by which to judge monarchies and empires. The essence of kingship has never been more perfectly phrased than in the famous words of Louis the Fourteenth when he said, "L'etat c'est moi." And when the State ceases to exist primarily for the king, as soon as the divine right to rule becomes a matter for question — at that moment monarchy begins to fail. So, in an empire, if the sovereignty of the empire state is diminished, if the States become equal in power, the empire ceases. And all in-

stitutions of a monarchy which do not support and pander to the power of the king are failures, just as imperial institutions are failures when they do not support the central sovereign State. But the institutions of democracy present a less simple problem.

Democracy is a dynamic condition. Democracy cannot be static. The very ideal of democracy implies a goal and a progress as well: democracy is the growth and the ever-vanishing attainment. What democracy means we cannot tell: we see only something toward which we must strive with the utmost zeal.

What, then, is a democratic institution? How is it to be tested? In a bureaucracy, which presents the most natural contrast to a democratic form of government, the aim is efficiency, the precise smoothness of a well-fashioned machine. Are we to apply this standard to the institutions of democracy? It is done again and again, but are those critics who expect a mechanically perfect operation the wisest? Are they not thoughtless when they say that our organization is too cumbersome, our public schools ill-managed, that there

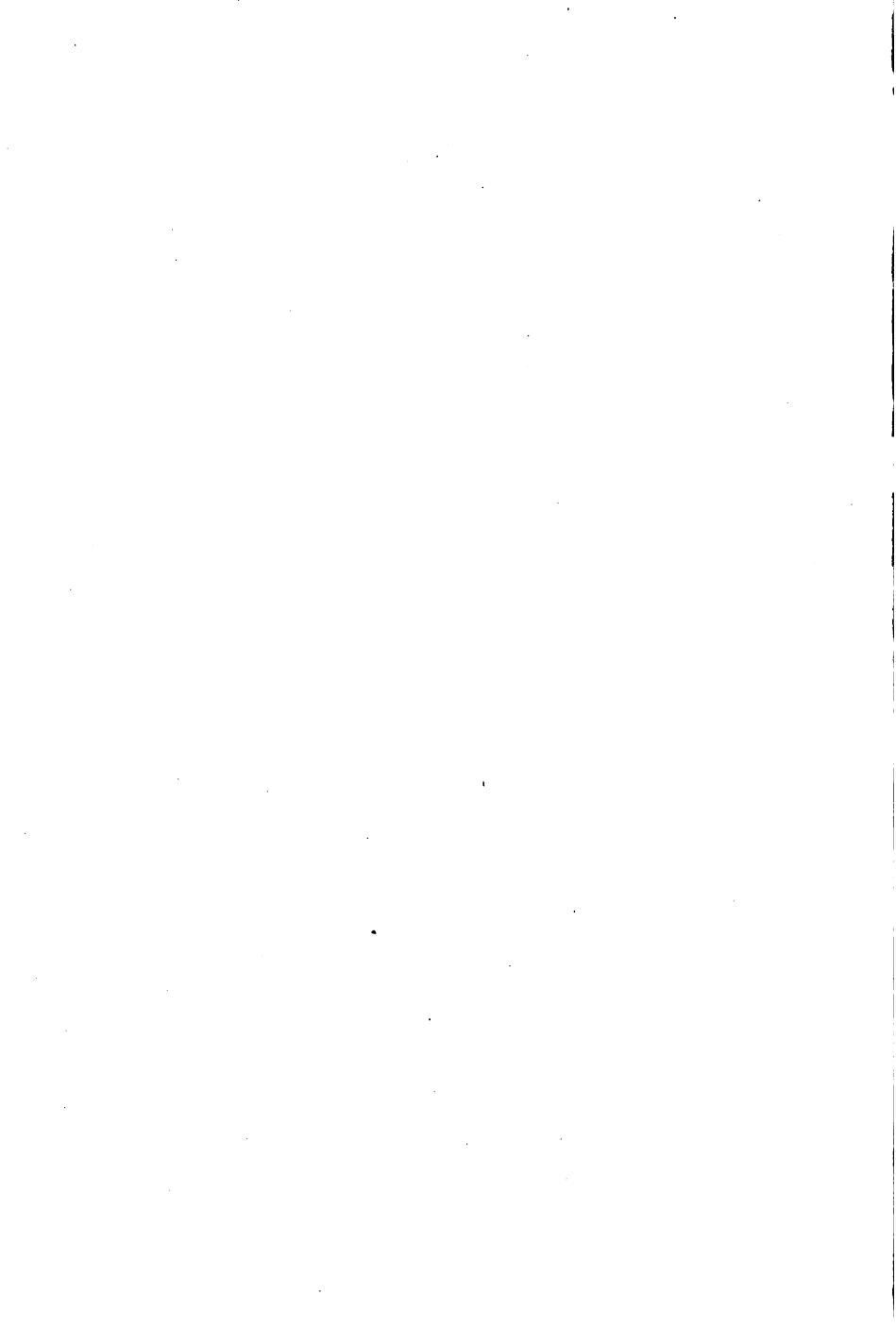
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is waste of public moneys in the administration of the town and state, that good men avoid politics, and that offices are filled with rascals under a system depending upon the mass of the people? Is it not evident that such criticisms, no matter how true they may be, are not fundamentally a criticism of democracy or of democratic institutions?

When we speak of democracy we speak in terms of the spirit, whereas when we put our ideals into action we are forced to employ the means of mind and of body. Let us look for a moment at the old bromide of democratic philosophy — "All men are created free and equal." How many times during the long march of human progress has that pillar of fire blazed in hope against the clouds of tyranny? We are accustomed to think of it as having its origin with Christianity; but the earliest barriers were down even before that time, and century by century the circle has widened, including more and more of humanity. Yet now, perhaps more than ever before, the differences in mental and moral as well as physical equipment are evident. Shall we, then, in spite of the varying



**NATIONAL SYLVAN THEATRE, WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**On the grounds of the Washington Monument.**



heritage, continue to believe that there is any equality upon earth? Yes, "all men are created free and equal" is none the less true because of the manifest inequalities in mankind's physical, mental, and material birthright. For freedom and equality are of the spirit, from which democracy seeks to remove the handicap by equalizing opportunity of mind and of body, since spirit is so closely wrapped in its garment of environment.

Democracy seeks to equalize opportunity. Opportunity — there is undoubtedly the keynote of democracy. Its institutions must be weighed not for what they are actually achieving alone, but for what they offer to those whom they influence. They must carry within themselves the seed of their own perpetuation and perfection. A democratic institution is more than an organization to meet certain ends, to solve certain immediate problems; it is the solution of those problems through the extent of the future as well. It must have not only efficiency, but the power to grow, and if one element is to be in excess of the other, the power to grow is more imperative.

In a certain city there arose not long ago the need for a revision of the civic affairs. Several new plans were proposed, of which two seemed to be more practical than any others; namely, that a commission should be chosen to control the city, or that it should be given into the hands of an efficiency expert, a business manager. Both these plans have been adopted by other cities; there was nothing in either suggestion which was revolutionary. And yet that city disposed of each in turn for equally sound reasons. They argued that what a city needs, what a city must have in order to be well governed, is not a capable business man, nor yet a board of three capable business men in authority, but good citizens. The city manager may do well this year and next year, but what if the citizens, either from lack of interest or from actual evil intent, choose for that position a bad man? Will the situation not be greatly aggravated? An absolute — or even a powerful — authority, if it be wrong, has unlimited force. And if the citizens are not all keenly alive to their responsibilities, the power so delegated is bound to come finally into evil hands. Thus

the city decided that a popular representative form of city government, closely responsible to the citizens, was what they wanted, and instead of changing their form of administration, they set out upon a campaign of stirring the citizens to interest and action. The results have not been startling, but the city is growing more promising every day.

Democracy has always seemed to me like a giant statue in the sculptor's atelier. We have the sculptor, his material and his idea, and in a work of art the three are separate. But in the democracy they are the same. The idea exists, clear as long as it can be limited, possible to perfect in miniature, but having, as a part of its greatness, vast proportions and an heroic cast. The perfect State could be made by the assembling of certain limited people together, perhaps — if they were the right people; and yet, when the attempt has been made, it has always proved that the very limitation injured the perfection of the ideal. The material of which the State must be formed is the people. They are untrained. They need purification. And the workman, the artist, he is represented by the



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people, untrained and groping, gaining a technique and a surety as he labors, growing as the work grows in beauty and in power. The very conception, the very thought of perfection will be at first as vague and indifferent as the outlines of the statue when the artist first takes his tool in hand, but as the work progresses and the workman grows, the conception will gain in beauty.

If we are willing to concede that democracy seeks to give an equal opportunity for growth to all of its citizens, it makes the testing of democratic institutions less complex. The final analysis must prove whether or not they permit the greatest freedom of the individual without limiting the freedom of the whole and the growth of the institution. The public schools, which I have mentioned so often, are a case in point. They offer an education to every child; they do not offer a perfect education because we have not yet discovered a perfect one, but there are no limits set beyond which an individual may not go, and the schools carry, in their universal opportunity, the possibility of attaining unknown heights. The schools are open to every child.

The same intellectual fare is set before all the children. And no boy or girl is hindered from becoming the future master of that school, to carry on its ideals and teaching in a new generation. This fact, taken in addition to the continual, eager, and scorching criticism of educators, is the most encouraging thing about our system of education. It is alive, it is vital, it is a part of the life of all the people; in a word, it is growing into an expression of an ideal.

Why should we not have a national laboratory of democracy, where, under conditions as nearly ideal as possible, experiments in the technique of democracy might be made? Indeed there exist already limited communities where useful tests might be made, and where, unless I am mistaken, unconscious experimentation is carried on. I mean the universities and especially those of the West, which are less influenced by the tradition of learning inherited from Europe than are the older Eastern ones. In a college we have a community from which the great chasms have been removed. The citizenry of this community is standardized by means of physical and mental examination, and by the fact that the struggle

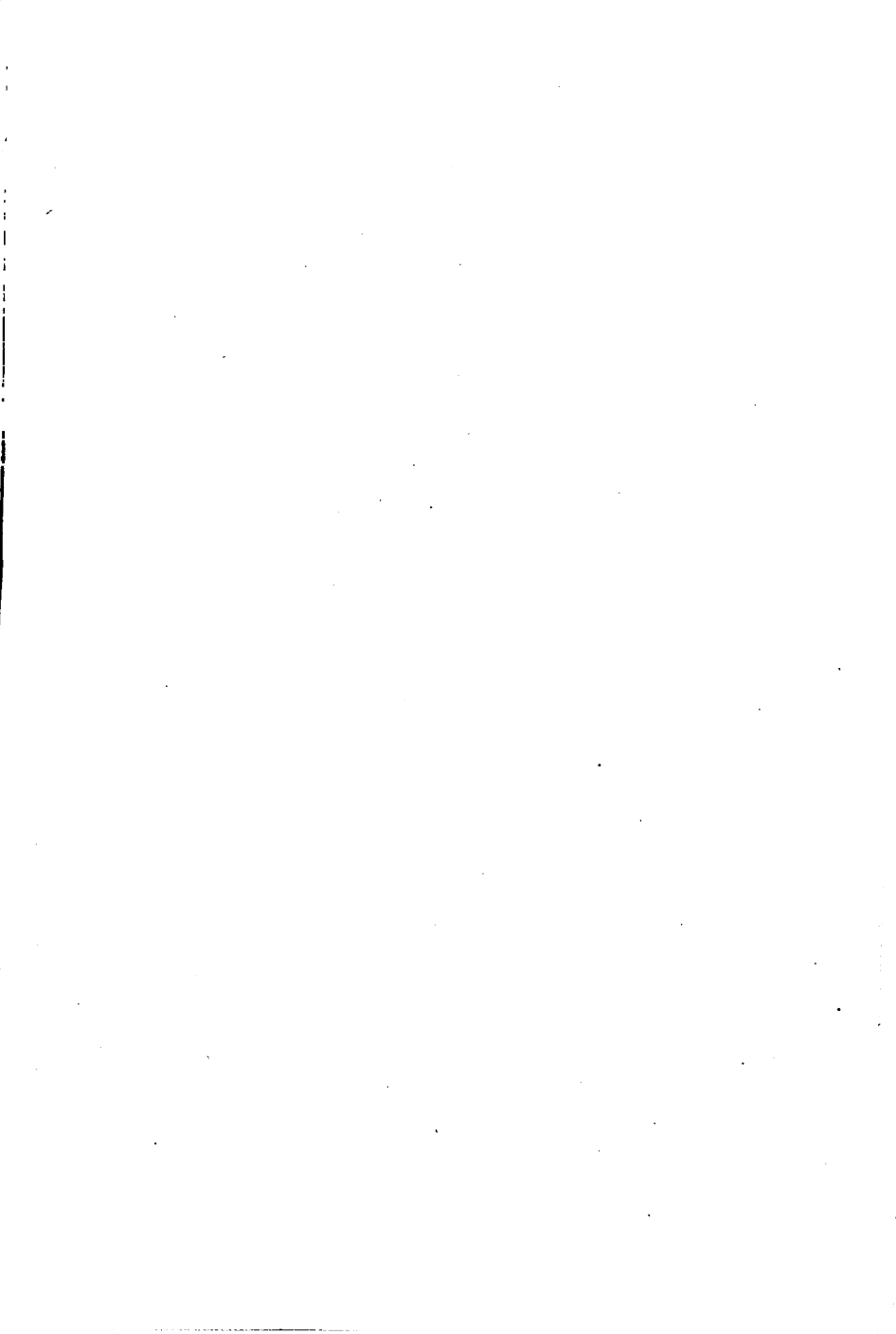
for existence is removed from within the college walls. Here is a group of people set above the currents of thought which influence the world, similarly endowed in most matters, and yet as varied as humanity will be wherever it is found. Surely here new forms of coöperation might be given trial, and no doubt might be invented.

Student government is the rule rather than the exception at the present time in colleges. For the most part, this term applies to a policing of the college community. Self-restraint is substituted for rule from above and is much more successful. Curiously enough, it has also been found a more stringent régime than the old one. And certain educators have gone so far as to express the wish that the student body may soon be given a voice and a responsibility in the management of affairs now considered the métier of the faculty and overseers.

I remember an incident, related I think by Mr. Lincoln Steffens, in an article I read in my college days, which indicates the effect of such an innovation. (I trust I do not distort the account, which I am unable to verify.) Some eager American students at an Old World uni-



**NATIONAL SYLVAN THEATRE, WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**The auditorium during preparations for a performance.**



versity found themselves listening to dry-as-dust lectures. The professors meandered at will over unimportant historical facts, instead of speaking practically and succinctly: men who had made great contributions to the science and thought of their subjects never came to them because of their slovenly methods. The indignant enthusiasts organized a new set of classes outside university control. They spoke harshly to the poor Herr Doktor. They permitted him no fooling and if he chanced to be late to a lecture they took him to task. The classes were a success. Who knows what the casual undergraduate might not accomplish under the prick of responsibility?

"Why," cries a much-loved professor in my own university, "why do they speak of 'interests and activities' in contrast with studies which we all know are neither interesting nor active? Tell me why!" It is evident that were "interests and activities" assigned by the paternal benevolence of an ancient curriculum, they too might become sluggish and perfunctory.

Athletics used to unify colleges; but during the past decade the forces of the theatre—usu-

ally called *dramatics* — have been gaining favor. The instance of Professor Koch's department in the University of North Dakota is only one: varied are the rumors of remarkable work which college undergraduates are doing. The Stadium at Harvard was new when it was used for the setting of *Joan of Arc*; the Yale Bowl was scarcely finished when it was utilized for Mr. Granville Barker's Greek revival, and for the dramatic celebration of a university holiday; and we have already reviewed at some length the use to which the College of the City of New York put its stadium in the production of *Caliban*. There is indication of the trend in the conversion of the vast monuments to athletics for the purposes of drama, but beside this fact smaller units have also been making an impression on the world at large. The type of college dramatic club has changed, and in place of vapid imitations of what is worst on Broadway, we have interesting and valuable work set before us in the Yale Dramatic Club, at Harvard University and at Dartmouth College.

A canvass of our colleges might prove rich in discoveries for the benefit of democracy and of

art. There must exist, unsung without the college walls, complete organisms which have grown up with the college community and which have the beauty of a natural growth. Such is the college theatre which it has been my privilege to know intimately, and from which, because of my association with it, I have drawn much of my data.

All this discussion of college athletics and dramatics is not malapropos. If we are to look to the universities as to the experimenting ground of democracy, it will be well to consider in detail the institutions which we find there. And we shall apply to those institutions the test which we apply to all the institutions of democracy: we shall ask whether they fulfill the great democratic demands. Have they within themselves the power to perpetuate themselves and in that perpetuation to become more perfect?



## CHAPTER VI

### A COLLEGE THEATRE

IN sketching plans for a community theatre I have made continual reference to my experience in the Idler Club of Radcliffe College. This dramatic club might well be put under the head "Little Theatre", since it fulfills a social need. But the community is the limited community of a college, and therefore the theatre stands as the result of laboratory experimentation from which we may draw conclusions to be applied to new conditions with care. The unusual degree of excellence, and the intimate response of processes to the existing needs are due to the fact that the theatrical organ is not one which was applied to an already matured group, but that it grew with the college from small beginnings.

When a group of women came together in Cambridge to study under the direction of

Harvard's professors, they came under much protest and opposition. Their common enthusiasm so removed them from ordinary facts of life that they wanted nothing beyond a consecration to learning. But the attitude toward women in an old university relaxed, and year by year younger women joined the ranks, until the social atmosphere became more normal. The desire for a bond arose, and its earliest satisfaction was a series of informal meetings where a few of the number presented programmes of music, dance, tableaux, or scenes from Shakespeare. It is interesting to notice that these women turned naturally to the same mode of entertainment and expression which has been customary in every kind of social group.

The efforts were successful. Gradually these periodic assemblies for common amusement assumed the more formal lines of a club. As the college grew, those phases of the meetings which were not directly associated with the arts of the theatre were dropped. With increasing frequency, the Idler produced plays.

But although the augmentation of the stu-

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dent body had crystallized the social unit into the Idler Club, and had assumed the tradition that a play occupy the bi-weekly meetings, there was no revolutionary change in the membership. Eligibility remained as wide as the college gates. Any student at Radcliffe may be a member of the Idler Club by paying her tax of one dollar a year; she cannot be otherwise disqualified. The college enrollment passed the six hundred mark some time ago, but the breadth of this policy is unchangingly successful. And whatever other interests have been added to the fullness of the undergraduate life, there is still nothing which attempts to supplant the universal function of the dramatic club.

Here near at hand, is a miniature community which has fostered the germ of civic unity, and produced a theatre expressing the will of the community itself. If I may be pardoned a paradox, here is a theatre truly universal within its own limits. One may say that what takes place behind the walls of a woman's college is not of vital importance; and it is true that the achievements of this theatre have

not startled the world. We must always remember that this is an experiment in the laboratory. The fact that an apple fell upon Sir Isaac Newton's nose — to refer to an old story — was not important except to Sir Isaac; and yet it would not be possible to set down in this brief space what the world might have lost had the falling of that apple meant nothing to the scientist beyond the injured member. In the case of the Idler Club, I do not find its productions notable, any more than I find the undergraduate work in other departments remarkable. But the form of organization is imperatively suggestive. In the college theatre we may watch certain elements at work, just as in the laboratory we watch the interaction of chemicals in a glass. And the results, scientifically applied to life, will give us a solution of great problems.

In watching the action of the chemicals in our glass, several points must be kept firmly in mind. We are looking for the combination of elements which shall simultaneously satisfy the social scientist and the artist of the theatre. The first, it will be remembered, demands an

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institution which shall unify the community, providing that common interest which is to supplant common ancestry and a common religious belief. While the artist demands that the arts of the theatre flourish like the green bay tree: he clamors for an audience filled with interest and intelligence, nourishing these arts as they have never been nourished, warming them with the sunlight of their favor and spurring them to growth by the dampening of their criticism. Can it be possible that the little crucible of a woman's college can contain elements so puissant?

Writing in 1911, while still an undergraduate, the present author spoke as follows of the Idler Club, —

The Club occupies a unique position among the dramatic clubs of women's colleges. It binds the college together in a social sense. It does for Radcliffe what dormitory life, sororities, and athletics do for Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley. With a carefully conceived and smoothly running machinery which is the development of years of slow growth, it is possible to produce nine or ten plays a year for the members of the club, that is, for college girls only; and to manage as well the execution of

several large plays to which outsiders are admitted. This number may seem large, but it could not be reduced without a definite loss. If we take away even one meeting, we cut down the proportion of the college population which now benefits by the productions. The girl who can bring tears to your eyes by the pathos or the fun of her interpretation of character, the girl whose artistic sense finds expression in a well-set stage and in a charmingly costumed picture, or perhaps the shy Freshman who needs to work hard with other people to forget herself—one of these will lose much if a single meeting is omitted. Statistics of committees show that in 1910, seventy-eight girls were used in executive positions beside an equal number in acting. In this way girls who have administrative ability are given the same opportunity to contribute that is given to those with dramatic gifts. Very often the same girl will have experience in both branches of play-production, and so learn to bear tenderly with a tired leading lady, or to have patience with an harassed costumer.

In this summing up of effects the glass takes on the color desired by the social scientist. Here is social unity, a bond provided. Here is mention of the advantage to every sort of citizen, the art citizen, the executive citizen, and the backward one whose gifts must be found and trained. Here is a system where every

member of the population is given one chance in the course of his lifetime — one official, active, dynamic chance — and what more could the social scientist ask to see in the cloudy glass?

Resuming, the account turns to the artist and his interests, in these words :

Then there is the Audience. For every play that she spends behind the scenes, the average Radcliffian spends twenty in the seats of the auditorium. But has she become bored when her course is over? No, she continues to sit with unflagging interest. Her attitude has been a constantly changing one. In her Freshman year she never doubted that the wine was real; there was a lump in her throat at the sobbing of the heroine. As a Sophomore she took delight in large criticisms, often wrong, but still based upon thought: she was learning that art is not all emotion. By Junior year she had reached the "upper-class" attitude, and influenced by her own experience, had found an intelligence in matters of technique, a keen critical faculty in the judgment of plays, acting, and details of stage setting. Four years of Idlers have taught her something of what is good in acting and what worth while in drama. If she wishes to work more deeply upon the theatre and drama, there are courses offered for her study — plays by college girls are given a hearty welcome, and are judged sympathetically as candidates for production — it is not necessary to mention

that the club gives unusual chances for the actress to try her powers, and for the artist in color, light, and line to make experiments.

And now the glass has revealed the aims of the artist of the theatre, has shown us the chance for artistic growth, and an audience taking a constructive part in the work of a theatre. Does it not seem as if the means which achieve such results might repay study sufficiently to discover what fundamental rules they follow?

In later chapters I have made use continually of the organization of the Idler Club, and so I shall not expound every minute cogwheel which goes to make the mechanism. It will be sufficient to observe here the great principles upon which the theatre has been erected, just as when we turn to a great world-illustration of a community theatre we shall see how those same underlying forces have produced the same results.

In the first place, the Idler Club belongs to the college. It is the possession of every member of the undergraduate body. The dues are low, corresponding exactly to a poll tax, cover-



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ing necessary expenses. There are no added expenses, making unexpected demands. One dollar a year covers the course of all the small plays.

The general administration is conducted upon the lines of popular representation. Every year at the annual meeting, the Club chooses its officers — president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The president and secretary are from the class which will be Seniors during their term of office, the vice-president will be a Junior, and the treasurer a Sophomore. Just when this tradition grew up is not certain, but with it came that of progression in office, which insures ability in the president to cope with the intricacies of the highly organized system of which she is to be head. The Sophomore who is elected treasurer will, if she prove satisfactory, pass on to the offices of vice-president and president in the two ensuing years, reelected in each case by the vote of all the Club.

These officers form an Executive Committee whose duty it is to control the business and social policy of the Club. They are assisted by

numerous minor committees, such as the Costume Committee, Lights Committee, Scenery Committee, Ushers Committee, which are appointed by the year, and many other temporary ones. These committees are appointed with great care, with continual regard for the fact that the entire population of the college must be permitted to do its part of the work.

The art administration of the Club, although in some cases it may prove to be greatly influenced by an individual president, is not in the hands of the elected officers, a point which is worthy of note. The Dramatic Committee, whose duty it is to choose plays and to produce them with suitable assistance, is under the leadership of a chairman, whose authority may well be said to be the final word in the artistic locale. The president is a member of the committee but not the presiding officer.

In the Dramatic Committee every other quality is sacrificed to artistic efficiency. From the Junior class are chosen the two most obviously gifted members. The first year of service will be their apprenticeship for the Senior season, when they will control the

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policy of the Club, one of them as chairman. And every year a third Senior member is added, who with the president — member ex officio — completes the board of dramatic direction.

Thus has this women's club solved the two primary problems which confront democratic institutions. It has related itself to the whole on the one hand, and on the other to efficient management. Socially, politically, and artistically, the Idler Club fulfills the needs of its small world. It is financially self-supporting, and more than that, it makes every year a present of money to the college. The tug of forces is the same in this little "body politic" as in more chaotic natural communities of the world. But before drawing any parallels, let us turn our attention to the outstanding example of a theatre belonging solely to the community which has startled and moved the whole of civilization.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE WORLD'S EXAMPLE OF THE COMMUNITY THEATRE

IN the mountains of Bavaria, far in spirit from the sophistication of cities, is a village which has given the world its greatest dramatic expression of the Christian religion, and the strongest evidence of what effect a community theatre, in its simple, literal sense, would have upon the community. This is no limited group of people. This is no brief experiment. Here is a village like the others in those mountains, and here, over a period covering not a few years but twelve generations, has existed a community theatre in its pure form. The outcome of this long interaction is evident in even as superficial a survey as we shall give it here.

The tradition which has come down to us from 1633 states that in that year a pestilence

raged over the country about Oberammergau. The ghastly contagion reached even to the village, resulting in eighty-four deaths from among its own ranks. The terrified assembly which gathered to discuss what must be done was closed by a vow to God that if He would save the town from the disease, the released would act the story of His Passion upon earth, in solemn joy, every ten years. From that day the plague ceased in Oberammergau.

Just what part or parts the monks of Ettal took in the founding of the *Passion Play* is not known; they have had a hand, it is thought, in the play as it now exists. And the gradual flowering of the production is lost in the confusion of truth with myth. But by the year 1870 the play was of sufficient import to be the ground upon which Joseph Maier was excused from military service when the Prussian War interrupted the performances. Ludwig the Second was sufficiently interested to grant this immunity and to become a patron of the theatre. When peace came, the *Passion Play* was given especially to celebrate the great joy of the community.

The vehicle by which the play is conveyed to its audience has kept all these years something of the simplicity of that now legendary time when it was produced in the church and the courtyard. A general committee of nineteen men control the entire preparations, with many sub-committees assisting in the manifold duties necessary to so vast an undertaking. The general committee makes appointments and chooses — a solemn matter — the candidates to play each part. The announcement of their decision is accompanied with much sorrow and joy, for no person in the village is without his ambition. Every girl has hoped to play the Virgin Mary: one at least has postponed her marriage that she might do so. And when Anton Lang was told that the Christus had fallen to him, he grew deathly pale before he silently left the room where he had been sitting with his father.

Since the world has traced its pathway up the steep mountain side to the *Passion Play*, the duties, expenses, and difficulties have increased. There is a new theatre and more splendid costumes. But these gorgeous vest-

ments are still made in Oberammergau, the actors have not acquired the theatrical device of wigs, and the scenery is still repainted at home. An amazing amount of simplicity is retained. The villagers feel themselves aloof from the world. The ravages of Mammon have been withstood. Of all the money which pours in, none is used for any but the best purposes: two-thirds, after expenses are paid, is divided among the seven hundred actors, in proportion to the importance of the class of each; the last third goes for the good of the entire town, in 1910, for example, to change the course of the Ammer, so that its floods might not threaten the town. It is easy to see that the pecuniary returns are not the motive power, when we learn that a man who might have made a fortune as an actor was paid £70 as the share of the Christus in the last performance.

The action of the *Passion Play* has been too often detailed to require an account.<sup>1</sup> The world is familiar with all the pageant from the cannon which calls the audience to Mass in the early morning to the chant of joy which rises over the Resurrection and Ascension, at

sundown. The procession of the Chorus through the streets, the eight-hour performances, the rapt reverence of the audience, and the joyous inspiration of the performers, are matters of common comment. Whatever the play may owe to its predecessor, the Medieval Mystery, just how many extraneous events have been lopped off in the course of its history, it matters only for our discussion that the play is a series of events in the life of Christ, opening with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and following the gospel story closely. Between these acts or scenes are placed tableaux from the Old Testament, prophetic of the Messiah. And the whole is accompanied by a Chorus which sings incidental music, rarely beautiful, not unlike the Greek chorus in its function.

All this ritual is like an echo in the hurried modern world; some lovely relic of fourteenth-century Italy, washed high on the mountain side by the tide of artistic growth, and treasured there in the isolation of its hiding place. The church in the village has fostered the forms, the music, the unsophisticated religious beliefs.



And the school has fed the dramatic progress: it has prepared simple peasants to become artists. Passionately inspired by the legends and ideals of Christianity, they express them in work and in living. The delicate wood-carving which is still their great industry, has persisted through the invasion of the modern tourist. How is it to be explained? Is this community a phenomenon? Did nature breed only artists here? Or can it be that the possession of a burning ideal, not individual, but shared by every citizen alike, has transformed ordinary Bavarian mountaineers?

The growth, complex and mysterious in its beauty as a spring violet, has pushed its way to perfection by processes as natural and universal as those through which the violet passed, seeking the sun. Its roots deeply penetrate the foundation of religion. This is not true merely because the *Passion Play* is a religious story: it has been equally true of every drama which attained true flowering. Japanese drama originated in a charm against Earthquake and his fearful power; the Persians based their earliest plays upon religious stories; the Indian

drama came into being when personages were introduced into religious hymns; and the Greek — the joy and despair of the world of the theatre — kept always in the great moments of the world's highest form of drama, its early intimate bond with religion.

The seed which was sown in Oberammergau was the crying need of all the community. A common fear and its resulting common joy have bound the village into a unity which resembles the interdependence of an organism. Whatever crowds may flock to the theatre on the celebration of the festival every tenth year, although they bring wealth to the village, they are not of as much weight as the little circle made by the inhabitants of the town. This is the real audience, which watches the careful, prayerful preparation of the play from day to day, whose highest conception of earthly honor is the assumption of the rôle of the Christ, and who, when asked to take their play traveling, replied that it would be necessary to take as well the whole village, and the *Kofel* which guards from year to year both village and theatre. Here is perfect unity

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between players and audience — there are no footlights to be crossed in Oberammergau! The artists and the listeners mingle and are lost one in the other, in a perfection of coöperation.

In this way the *Passion Play* and its attendant secular performances have come to be the centre of the life in Oberammergau. They form the stem from which spring all other activities. Carving, toy-making, and the task of the herdsman continue; but it is the group occupation which furnishes the chief interest of the villagers. The attainment of eminence in the *Passion Play* is their highest goal; the most rigid punishment for an evildoer is the expulsion from the common work in it.

Fräulein Mayer — the Mary Magdalen of the last performance — speaks with Oberammergau's own voice of what the *Passion Play* means to her people. In a recent letter she writes:

I am seriously interested in the idea of having the dramatic art introduced into country communities. It is no doubt a great educational factor, it binds its members in a closer union; it is an ideal to which each and every one can devote heart and soul. Of course it is

the individual that has to act like a stimulant and set ambition, love, and enthusiasm on fire, for without those three forces, nothing can be gained. I will not mention the material side of it, for it takes care of itself.

The Community Theatre in Oberammergau is the result of centuries. It is an inborn inheritance which proves the evolution of a steady living and growing into their parts. We have annual plays, given in our Rehearsal Theatre, where children are allowed to act and to give self-expression to their interpretation, which of course makes the child creative. The director, who is also an Oberammergauer (years ago my own father supervised the rehearsals and preparations for the *Passion Play*) may reject or sanction one's ideas. They follow certain tradition. However, one can create one's own part, whether in the *Passion Play*, or in the other Plays.

Since the time of Richard Wagner and Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, the drama has flourished not merely in the city but to a great extent in the country, where, as is the case with my own village, we get the benefit out of the high artistic reproductions of the theatre in Munich.

Drama and Music go hand in hand, and the people love to cultivate these Muses.

And Fräulein Mayer is not alone in feeling that the *Passion Play*, the Community Theatre in Oberammergau, as she calls it, is the cause

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of the uniqueness, rather than the result of any unusual gift in the mountain stock. Mr. William T. Stead wrote with no little emotion, in the guide book which he made for travelers to the *Passion Play*, of the life in the village when the curious outside world had ebbed back down the mountain side. His words are a fitting close to our discussion.

"Their royal robes laid aside," he said, "they go about their ordinary work in the ordinary way as ordinary mortals. But what a revelation it is of latent capacity, musical, dramatic, and intellectual, in the human race, that a single mountain village can furnish under capable guidance, and with adequate inspiration, such a host, competent to set forth such a play, from its herders, tailors, ploughmen, bakers, and the like. It is not native capacity that is lacking to mankind. It is the guiding brain, the patient love, the careful education, the stimulus and inspiration of a great idea. But given these, every village from Dorset to Caithness might develop artists as noble and devoted as those of Oberammergau."

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHAT THE THEATRE OFFERS

INSTITUTIONS of democracy are distinguished by the fact that they possess the power to perpetuate and perfect themselves while they give the greatest amount of freedom for development to the individuals of which they are composed. The theatre is preëminent among the arts in those qualities which fit it for establishment upon a basis of democracy. For, unlike painting or sculpture, the theatre is a complex art. It is a composite created by uniting and harmonizing the labor of all the arts.

No one is excluded from the theatre. Here is a workshop for every kind of workman. The impulse of imitation, the instinct of representation, upon which Aristotle based his theories of art in the *Poetics*, may here find a place to grow, not only in their greatest but in their humblest manifestations. It is not easy

to confine the desire to create within limits. The expression of the imitative faculty often is remote from what we are accustomed to think of as creation. Clearly it is this impulse which causes the little girl to mark out with stones the rooms of her "house" under the big tree in her back yard, before she calls to "Mrs. Robinson" to come over the fence and pay her a visit. From similar stirrings rises the fascination which a little boy in his nursery finds in building him a cathedral of blocks—"but not quite like the picture, Mother!" When to announce a royal approach in a school pageant, a gawky boy is changed for the moment of his difficult trumpeting into a Herald of the King, the charm is due to the magic of the impulse to create. But these cases are obvious. Clearly such impulses are trained and led through the art of the theatre. It is of more obscure instances that it is necessary to speak.

The artist cannot stand alone in the theatre. He is dependent upon a host of other workers. It does not take a specially trained or gifted person to set up a proper range in a New England kitchen, but in that act one worker

may find as much satisfaction for his impulse to create as another would find in the playing of Hamlet. There are innumerable little tasks about the production of every play which must be accomplished and which with proper care can be made to do the double duty of serving the theatre and the one who undertakes them. A doorbell must ring at the right moment — who will press the button? Why not the boy who tinkers with old electric batteries at home and who could never do anything else in the theatre because he is too shy? A pane of glass must crash to the floor outside the door to make it seem that windows are being broken — what a chance for the boy who is destructive and likes to break glass! Bring him in and make his desire to smash constructive in spite of him. A mysterious gray figure must slip across the open doorway in the twilight: surely this is an excellent opportunity for the little trembling grandmother who has longed for years to *act on the stage*, but who is not able to do more, since the habit of her life prevents her. It is easy to conjure up the picture she would make,



wrapped in a long robe, faltering with anxiety and desire suddenly attainable, flushed with pardonable pride when the escapade was over! Moreover, there are frocks to be shortened, delicate draperies to fashion, letters which must be written and sealed with a splotch of sealing wax. The writer remembers still what energy and care she once put into such a document, and the pleasure which filled her when the chief actor nonchalantly broke it open!

Closely allied to the creative force behind these details is the energy which we call executive ability. The power to arrange and to organize takes the place in certain gifted people of the desire to make things. It is a necessary quality, and one which will find outlet through the community theatre. For the theatre, in order that it produce the most finished plays and that it give as much joy as possible to the community, will require every ounce of organizing power within its scope. The machinery of the theatrical factory is complicated: it demands attention in every great and less degree. The control of the audience is an important branch: the theatre should know

the feelings and hopes of its body. Moreover the physical facts of production are made easy by classification and arrangement: costumes, wigs, and properties should be in careful order and under the charge of trained workers. The system of seating must be invented and managed by a corps of efficient ushers. And with every performance new problems will arise to tax the ingenuity of the orderly mind.

The community is not to be, in the theatre, like the same community in its park outside. The community theatre will gather a collection of heterogeneous units, but it will mold them into one whole. The community in the park has nothing further in common than such advantages as are offered by a common locality: in the theatre it is to work together, it is to play together: to feel as one individual, to share its laughter and its tears.

The theatre is peculiarly adapted to serve as a common interest for a diverse community. It has something of the emotional and underlying quality of religion, without the dogmatic and metaphysical limitations of the Church. It can express the beauty which religion in

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every form is expressing, without exciting the antagonism which follows the intricate argument dependent upon creeds. The theatre can join the Church, and, beyond, can gather to itself the social, lay endeavors, making them one. Even the most Quakerish dissenters from the evils of "play-acting" may be won over with tact. The experience of playground directors demonstrates how prejudice may be circumvented. Many recreation centres have met with opposition so vigorous that it seemed a menace to their lives when they suggested the introduction of folk dancing into the routine. Yet the evident value of the rhythm and vitality which are the chief characteristics of the dances made strategy worth while. Therefore the youngsters in those protesting vicinities have been sent home talking of "fancy steps", and in due time the most violent opposers have joined in the general applause at the exhibitions of their skill!

Too much stress cannot be put upon the value of the community theatre in providing a common cause for a community. Our commercially organized society has distorted values

by a continued emphasis upon the ability to grasp until we have lost enthusiasm for the power to give. In the community theatre we are as individuals less concerned with snatching away something for selfish ends than we are with contributing to the store of common beauty. The qualities which are most in play will be the altruistic attributes. To refer once more to Fräulein Mayer's phrasing, the theatre is, as she says, "an ideal to which each and every one can devote heart and soul."

The community in the theatre falls into three distinct groups, or better, into three aspects, for the group is persistently the whole community. There is the audience as a whole, that personalized assembly whose thought the artist of the theatre strives to vitalize. Secondly, there is the artist group, the division which includes in a sense the least member of the audience, but which has a kernel in those gifted ones to whom the artistic control will be delegated. And lastly there are the workers whose activities are in every branch of executive management, and the multitudinous necessary duties of production. In each

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aspect the theatre offers great benefits to the audience.

As a whole the community audience receives an intelligent relaxation to beguile its leisure hours. This house of play is the property of the whole community. It is based upon an intellectual cornerstone, and is constantly changing. It offers recreation, the relief and revivifying of faculties fagged with labor : it offers amusement, and one of its basic principles should be to make that amusement coincide with the desire of the audience. For the audience is its cause for existence and its excuse for continuance.

Entertainment will be its primary aim : to divert and to serve as a pastime will be its first duty. But because the audience is to be an active and not an inert recipient of this entertainment, and because every kind of influence will be given a chance to exert itself, the quality of the theatre's products is bound to improve. It may do so very slowly ; but it is a curious fact that human beings, by doing one thing well, learn to appreciate the intrinsic value of another thing well done, and growth is inevitable. ✓

After it is amused, then, the audience may find an intellectual stimulus in its theatre. The leisure of such a community becomes, in Mr. MacKaye's vivid phrase, "a constructive leisure." The art of the theatre is, like all arts, based upon the emotions of the human race, and is expressed through the limitations of the human intellect. The most primitive member of the community is moved by the appeal to his emotions, but step by step the superimposing of an intellectual appeal has its effect until the *form* and the *expression* also have weight. This feeling for form is the beginning of the education of the audience. The theatre now becomes an intellectual as well as a sensuous pleasure; it satisfies the cravings of the mind as well as the desire for rest and relaxation. And with the birth of an intellectual interest comes also a broadening and a stimulation of taste.

But all these things are slow processes. The audience learns through its participation in the work of the theatre, through the constantly changing demands of the theatre, the work on committees and the art interpretation.

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The association with great works of art is in itself a stimulation, but such works of art cannot be used to the exclusion of less admirable ones for reasons of policy and practical common sense.

To those members of the community whose life is to be spent in the world of art the theatre opens its arms. In organization, in execution, in the details of financial management, even in the humanitarian sciences, the theatre offers opportunities; but these are not gifts which can be found in no other place. Public offices unconnected with art are rich in them. But the artist is handicapped: our present society offers him no studio under the cold north light of which he may test his visions and discard them for fresh ones. The theatre gives him that studio. It is — odious as the word often seems — a school for artists.

No artist is forgotten: the work of each is equally welcome. The musician as well as the actor; the playwright, poet, and composer alike; the dancer and the mimic; the architect and the sculptor, the painter with his palette on his arm — each and every one has

his niche. They are marshalled in comradeship: they lean one upon the other: now one shall claim the chief importance, the stage's centre, and now another. The arts in the theatre shall rediscover the old interdependence.

It may well be said that already interaction and interdependence have been established in the commercial theatre. That is true, but true only in a limited sense, for the restraint exercised by the precariousness of the theatrical profession disturbs the perfect balance. The mingling of the arts is vital, but not so vital as the existence of a true public, a living, breathing audience.

This new audience is not to be a *precious* body. It is not a set of dilettante sensation seekers. It has normal reactions and a keen interest which is practical and immediate. Here is some one to listen to what the artist has to say — not to listen curiously as to some oddity in a museum, but to give him quiet attention. The artist will not complain because flaws are found in his work: he will take the condemnation of his color-values, the discovery of limping lines in his blank verse, and the



shocked faces at his disharmonies, with glowing pride because he has the real eye, ear, and mind, of real people. Then the makers of beauty may flourish among us as natural creatures instead of anomalies, and art come into its own.

After all, the sum of what the theatre offers to the artist lies rather in the reinstatement of art than in his personal acquisition. By the establishment of the theatre in the community as common property, by assembling the forces of the people for general good, the arts which are the fruits of the endeavor become objects of civic admiration. We are a puritanical country. How often do we stumble on proofs of it! We are shy of what appeals strongly to our senses. We feel an uneasiness in the presence of art: we distrust it as a life force. But in the community theatre there is a chance for art to bloom under the eye of the whole people, to answer the crying need. In the community theatre a universal recognition of art becomes not only possible but inevitable. This is the great gift of the community theatre to the artist — and to all the people.

## CHAPTER IX

### HOW SHALL WE ORGANIZE?

To all who wish to organize a theatre in their community it is necessary to say only, "Begin." Begin now. If three people and no more are ready, let two of them act for the joy of the third! Do not wait for a theatre, but make a barn the playhouse, and give an out-of-door play in the summer sunshine of late June. Turn the porch into a stage, or let a parlor serve the purpose to an auditorium adjoining from which the dining table has been temporarily removed. The *Passion Play* of Oberammergau was first given in the church of the village, and the Abbey Theatre was made from a morgue!

If there be a village green, why not begin with a pageant there? It will help advertise. Let half-hearted believers be shown the flash of color and the stately movement as the town's most distinguished ancestor enacts for them

his most historic deeds: few will remain half-hearted after they have watched the stirring spectacle. First of all, let there be a living spirit. If that spirit exists, if the desire be alive — no matter how insignificant the spark — tasks Herculean in size may be brought to completion.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has long been an advocate of the theatre as an established State institution. No other person has tried so hard to found a National Theatre in England. But of all that he has said and written, a statement made before the Harvard Dramatic Club, some five years ago, has impressed itself most vividly upon my memory. "The theatre needs," said Mr. Jones, "not great monuments like the New Theatre in New York City, but teachers, enthusiasts, *Saint Pauls of the Drama*." Such apostles of the theatre may work wherever they may be: certainly the Christian religion did not demand a cathedral for its early practice!

It is equally unnecessary to wait for money. Do not worry about luxuries; begin without a penny. The original endowment of the Abbey

Theatre was notoriously ten guineas. Poverty, when it does not entail hunger, serves as an invigoration. The theatre without money will be limited, but not in its capacity for growth. Every device of ingenuity which the moneyless theatre employs will increase the wealth of that theatre a thousandfold. The theatrical profession has been taught a great lesson about expenditure. New York productions — and many others as well — were challenged by the artistic excellence of the Portmanteau Theatre under Mr. Stuart Walker's direction. Yet in his introduction to "Portmanteau Plays", Mr. Edward Bierstadt asserts that money was a force almost negligible in the Portmanteau campaign. Mr. Walker found no lack of enthusiasm for a play, the cost of which was actually not one cent: on the contrary, its success equalled his most expensive production, the play upon which he lavished fifteen hundred dollars. However, to the Broadway producer it does not seem more astounding that a play which cost nothing should succeed than that any play could be staged with an expenditure of only fifteen hundred dollars!

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For upon Broadway men think in thousands of dollars: it is inconceivable that the theatre should be established (as Mr. Walker's was) with only three thousand dollars capital and the vital energy of young enthusiasm.

The spirit which is not thinking of money is clearly shown in Oberammergau. Fräulein Mayer writes simply, "I will not mention the material side of it for it takes care of itself." She speaks a great truth: the community theatre which will be the greatest success is not the one which begins with the largest present of money, but the one where the spirit of coöperation and fellowship is thriving most vigorously.

Begin at once with the two or three members whose faith is strong. But begin upon a strong foundation of fellowship. Let no limits be set upon the membership: make the theatre as wide as the community. Do not allow what seems like the promise of an immediate growth to limit and narrow the most valuable asset a theatre can have. In a village every member — every inhabitant — should be included: neither youth nor age should be cause for ex-

cluding an interested candidate. The doors of the theatre should always swing wide open to the magic of the word "willing." At first it will be possible to include only those who come of their own desire; when the theatre has been firmly established, when it actually belongs to all the community, the recalcitrants will be dragged in by the tug of public opinion. But in the beginning it will be well to let the members feel that he who comes must bring a gift, that any gift, however small, is welcomed, and that every member of the theatre groups will share equally in all the privileges of the theatre.

Membership in the community theatre should never be limited except by the limits of the community. Individual cases will expound peculiar problems. The age limit is one which is common to all theatres, and which will be variously solved. To exclude children and growing boys and girls seems not only unkind to them, but also unwise from every angle from which it can be considered. It would naturally deprive the theatre of valuable material. At the same time it would also take away some-

thing which the children could get in no other way — the joy of guided self-expression, the possibility of coöperative work, and an interest at once intellectual and amusing.

However, in every theatre it may not be possible to include all children, and in that case, a children's supplementary organization, which could be formed, would serve as a feeder for the grown-up theatre. A play given by both these once a year will offer an interesting exchange of ideas.

Membership, then, is not to be limited except by residence in the actual group. Villages which have to meet the question of summer colonists will certainly not exclude them, but will take care not to let a part assume the responsibilities and the benefits of the whole. Summer visitors will prove helpful: there no doubt will be gifted and able individuals among them; but they must not carry off all the honors. The theatre must let the "summer people" speak, but must not aim to lisp only in their words.

Closely associated with membership is the question of dues — of the taxation upon which

the first financial endowment of the theatre is to depend. This should be small, indeed purely nominal, as the poll tax is nominal — something which every one must and can pay. There should be nothing resembling the old initiation fee of a dramatic club. The sum, of course, must be set to accord with the needs and financial vision of the people: a dollar is by no means a fixed sum; there are places which regard it as negligible and others where its value is tremendous. In country towns where barter still persists the fact that the theatrical tax was one dollar a year might keep many members from "joining."

Montclair, New Jersey, has established during the past year a theatre whose ideals of membership and whose general policy are in accordance with the strictest community theatre demands. In Montclair every one is welcomed into the theatre: during the few months of its existence, the number of members has passed two hundred and fifty, if not at this time three hundred. The dues are fifty cents a year — moderate certainly, for a township which is usually considered a rich one. This



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membership, however, does not admit to all performances of the theatre, to which tickets are sold at a basic price of twenty-five cents each; but does give one the entrée to a special performance at the end of the season, to which no seats are sold.

This plan seems not so wise as the one of having a larger tax, and giving more definite meaning to its payment. Why not charge a dollar and exclude from acting and from the usual programme of plays all people who are not members? Let the membership committee be composed of tactful and thoughtful people: should any candidate appear whose inability to pay a dollar was evident, let proper means for the earning of that dollar be provided. If necessary, have the payment of the dollar in two parts; but let the dues cover the expenses of the year's list of plays. And, instead of one play to which only members and their invited guests may come, why not have one or two plays, widely advertised and produced with great care, to which the world is bidden? They will increase membership and the money in the treasury.

It may be said that the first plan, the payment of a small tax and of letting non-members as well as members see all the plays and act whatever parts they can, is broader and more truly democratic. On the contrary, it seems to me that it is necessary everywhere in life to lay equal emphasis upon privilege and responsibility. The theatre needs the dignity of a social recognition as much as it needs the money which increased membership will bring: the membership should therefore have a definite meaning and should be defined by a clearly drawn line. Those outside that line should not share the advantages of those inside, but no one should be kept outside arbitrarily.

However small the actual number of members which forms the nucleus of the community theatre, it will be well from the first to make it assume the outlines of a democratic government. It may be that some more fortunate form of government, lacking the defects which are so clearly recognizable in the practice of democracy, the faults of wire-pulling and politics and inefficiency, some form

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of government with less discrepancy between the ideal and the exercise of the function, may be discovered by our children's children. In the meantime, however, we are accustomed to the device of popular representation: it is a contrivance which seems natural. From the beginning, it will be well to let every member of the audience feel his own authority by submitting the choice of the executive staff to a popular vote.

Such a course meets at once two major objections: officers chosen by vote are not necessarily the most efficient candidates, and the audience-body is not necessarily the best judge of things artistic; it will be more likely to elect its officers upon a basis of political popularity. These two fundamental difficulties must be dealt with by a limitation of the power of each office rather than by any restriction of the power of choice conferred upon the audience. The direction of the art policy will have to be organized carefully, guarding against placing too much power in the hands of an officer liable to be influenced by politics: the whole must be delicately adjusted to suit the needs of

the audience as well as those of the most favorable art conditions.

The president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, may be elected by the audience. The pull of politics will no doubt be evident at once: parties will form, perhaps, one leaning towards a definite art policy, and one strongly in favor of popular control at the expense of artistic achievement. But these two parties are best calculated to make the theatre an answer to the dreams of both its founders. Neither the aims of the artist of the theatre, nor those of the social scientist will be wholly neglected through an over-attention to the claims of the other; a proper balance will be maintained, not the result of inertia, but the vital balance which comes from the opposition of strong forces.

To add to the efficiency of the executive corps some form of progression in office may be adapted to each community. In a town made up of every kind of person, the simple method which the Idler Club has developed at Radcliffe College would prove too obvious. Besides, it might be difficult to find a person

who could sacrifice so much time to the theatre for three or four consecutive years. If, however, the officers be elected from those who have served upon one of the numerous committees of management (which will be treated in detail at a later point), and if the chief executive must be elected from the officers of the previous year, it will accomplish much the same results. No executive officer will come to his post without training of some sort in the practical work "behind the scenes"; and the presiding officer, during two years of service, will have learned the details of his machinery, its powers and its limitations.

The president's chief qualification should be rather for execution of practical detail than for art creation in the theatre. The director of the art policy should not be a person who is chosen by the vote of the audience: his characteristics are rarely those which would make him sufficiently popular to win him an election. The art direction should be removed as far as possible from the effects of politics: the management should lie in the hands of an *appointed* officer. His appointment must not

rest in the hands of one person, but should be subject to the approval of several: the president who is entering office, taking counsel with the retiring president and with the art director of the previous year, and limited somewhat in his action by their opinions, might control the decision. The committee which with the director is to execute the art policy will in turn be chosen by the new director and the new president, still advised by the experienced officers of the former year.

The matter of the term of service for a director is another point which must be differently decided in different localities. No doubt at first there may be one person who stands out as preëminently *the* director. It would be unwise to put into the office people utterly unfit for its duties simply because of a rule that the director must change every twelve months. Indeed, I am inclined to the belief that a longer term of office will prove more satisfactory. On the other hand, there is danger in one person's too steady control of the art policy: terms of office should not be unlimited. And from the committee under the

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director there will come candidates filled with promise and fresh ideas.

These chief officers then, the president, the vice-president, the secretary, and the treasurer, form the *Executive Committee*. They will control broadly the plans of the theatre and its general management. In their turn they will be assisted and supported by a large number of minor committees, appointed and reinforced every year, which carry on the difficult special services of the ordinary running of a theatre. The art director with his committee will produce, stage, and coach the actors of every production. He will, moreover, read the plays, with the assistance of the *Play-reading Committee*, and choose his programme. For his assistance there will be maintained a *Committee on Costumes*, a *Committee on Settings*, a *Committee on Lighting*, a *Committee on Wigs and Hairdressing*, and a *Committee on Properties*. These specialized groups will be able to tell him exactly what exists in the stock of the theatre, and will arrange that he gets whatever he needs. Their duties and their training will be examined in the next chapter.

Thus, with a careful protection of the art direction, and the limitation of the powers of the executives who depend directly upon popular election for their offices, it will be possible to establish a system of checks and counter forces upon the whimsical will of a democratic control. And although when the organization is founded with a small circle only — the two or three members mentioned at the beginning of this chapter — it will not be possible to follow so elaborate an arrangement, the details may well be kept in mind, for the growth will be rapid, and the need for a fair assignment of duties will promptly be forced upon the organizers.



## CHAPTER X

### WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH LITTLE

TECHNOLOGY of production in the theatre is not the concern of these chapters. It belongs rather to each individual who will find himself in control of the artistic problems. But there are certain experiences which taken in conjunction are an argument against those members of the theatrical profession who feel the need for great sums of money in the launching of any theatrical enterprise. It is possible to create fine stage effects with only the smallest resources.

A number of books upon the new theories of stage decoration are named in the Appendix. They dwell upon the importance of eliminating details and speak at length upon abstract questions: they are valuable to the student and to the would-be producer. Design, color, light and shade, contrast, spirit, and mood of

the play and of the scene, are details that demand an ultimate attention; but it is much more likely that the first question the director will have to meet will have a more pressing form. He will not be asked for a solution to any problem in theoretic design: he will be importuned to make a garden which shall satisfy every one. And can a garden be made without money?

There is little an artist cannot do when cornered. I remember, in the whitewashed basement room which served for an atelier for the scene painter of the 47 Workshop at Harvard, watching the final strokes put on a fountain. Two paint-daubed workmen hung over it. They gloated over the tiny thread which silvered into the basin. Even in the harshness of the daylight the painted wood and canvas looked like a relic of Medieval Italy. Under lights it took on a far-away reality: the silver ribbon purred caressingly against the distorted gray-green mouth. Yet to the artist and his turpentine scented assistant the chief factor of the triumph lay in the origin of the grinning face and the hollow bowl.

The humble beginnings of that Italian fountain were a child's Santa Claus "false face", a wooden chopping bowl — deftly sawed into shape — and a bit of tarnished silver braid.

The statement that economy and great art are inseparable has become platitudinous. The worker in the arts should not feel stinted, but he should be convinced that he must avoid effort — effort in his materials, effort in his thought, and effort in his methods. There must be exertion and struggle, but the result of the labor should be so simple and so natural that it seems wholly effortless. Again and again there are two possible ways of expressing an idea — the simple way and the complex or sophisticated one. It has been a fault of our theatre that it too often takes the complicated rather than the straightforward way.

Elsewhere I have spoken of Mr. Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre. The requirements of Mr. Walker's stage are such that he has been forced to employ the most simple means, even had he not been drawn to simple things by his tastes. The photograph of *The Seven Gifts*, the Pantomime which the Port-

manteau Players gave in Madison Square, shows how simple a picture may be without losing anything of loveliness. The unaffectedness of the design, the repose of the figures, and the elimination of every unnecessary detail, are characteristic of Mr. Walker's work. He drops his deep blue curtains, moves a table and two whimsical chairs to his forestage, and, behold, we are in "a room just up-stairs." Or, with a soap box and a generous supply of imagination, he turns that same forestage for us into the bank of a river.

The primary (or I might have said, kindergarten) productions which I have mentioned may teach much to the beginner in the theatre. (To follow Mr. Walker's more venturesome flights would require his trained corps of artists.) There are many plays which can be staged amusingly without expenditure of money, if only thought and skill are available.

One small stage with which I have been long familiar was built by an architect whose ideals aimed at stability rather than pliability. The walls are inexorably plastered and painted. Out-of-door scenes are often the despair of the

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producer ; but, making a virtue of its weakness, he continually used the stage as an interior with telling effect. Panels of wall paper applied with thumb tacks changed the room from a New England colonial parlor to a Louis XVI boudoir, at a cost which was utterly negligible. Or again, with a hanging of inexpensive chintz, it became a modern English drawing-room. And the wall paper as well as the chintz could be rolled up and packed away in a small space when not in use.

The use of screens and of hangings has totally altered our ideas of stage illusion. It is not necessary that every least can of sardines be in place, in staging a scene in a grocery store. The shop may be as living and as *spiritually true* when it is made of a deal table, a row of wooden boxes which have cranberries and carrots peeping out, and a tall bucket or so in the background. A beautifully embroidered scarf hanging on a dark screen may change a bleak hall into a regal throne-room, and long soft curtains may be turned into a forest, a peasant's hut, or a lady's chamber by the use of a single property in each separate scene : by

the adroit placing of shadows to simulate the woods, by the rough hewn bench of the peasant, and by the delicate prie-dieu with a scarlet cushion upon which the lady kneels.

The same property may be used again and again. In the property room of the Idler Club is a silvery whistle which was originally acquired to indicate the passing of the midnight flier. It tooted much like a locomotive and sent little chills down the backs of the listeners. But since that day the gleam of that whistle has served many a purpose. Once it was the flashing revolver which kept the villain at bay until the hero arrived to clasp the fainting heroine: again it was valuable family silver, looted by burglars from the safe: it whistled outside for everything from a tugboat to a policeman: it was a toy in the nursery and part of a soldier's equipment. The cost of the whistle was twenty-five cents, eight years ago: it is as fresh and energetic, as shrill and ear splitting to-day as it was the day it was triumphantly unwrapped for the admiring ears of the greenroom assembled!

*The Chinese Lantern* by Lawrence Housman

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suggests endless trains of thought in the psychology of stage illusion. In China the heaviest carved furniture is in use. The houses are not, like those in Japan, built of paper. People do not sit on the floor. And yet Mr. Housman has given directions for all these things, and when under the inspired direction of Mr. Sam Hume, the play was produced in Cambridge, friends of the author, who had lived for twenty years in China, could not say too emphatically that it was exquisitely Chinese. The color and the light which played against the soft-tinted, glazed background followed the emotion of the play step by step, and wove into its texture a faint Orientalism, as delicate and fanciful as a dream. Only the slightest suggestion of the charm of the staging can be found in the photograph of the set, by Mr. Hume and Mr. Gardner Hale, which is shown on the opposite page.

Every one has been astonished at some time by the marvel of a simple charade, by the infinite variety of a table cover, and the charm of a garment worn upside down. One member of a family assumes a strange wild aspect when



Photo by Pach Studio, Cambridge.

# THE CHINESE LANTERN

Produced by the Idler Club of Radcliffe College, under the direction of Mr. Sam Hume.





he is dressed in the garments of another: a collar and black coat put on backwards quickly change the *enfant terrible* into churchly solemnity. There is little difference in producing a vast spectacle: the proportions are larger, but the elements remain the same.

Costuming a play is a much simpler matter than many people suppose. It is not necessary to consult a costumer, to hire elaborate hideousness; it is not even necessary to buy expensive materials. From attics and old trunks the most amazing treasures may be dragged to light. Old evening frocks can be altered in the twinkling of an eye by a free use of safety pins to almost any picturesque period. A beaver hat is sure to lurk in an unexpected corner. An ancient military cloak will shake out the scent of old romance from its folds along with the flutter of dust and moths. The pretty paraphernalia of our grandmothers, the fans, the high-heeled slippers, the quaint coquettish sunshades, need not remain in seclusion. They should take their proper places.

When the first Peterborough Pageant was produced in memory of Mr. Edward Mac-

Dowell, Professor George P. Baker and the Committee were at a loss where to find hoops and the calico prints which were needed to make the Civil War scene — to be played in the plain light of day — untheatric and real. Professor Baker delights in relating how he found everything, even the hoops, packed away in the dingy recesses of the village shop: and he adds, with a twinkle of humor, that the store-keeper was finally prevailed upon to sell them at less than the wartime prices!

The most impressive *Morocco* who ever sued for *Portia's* hand wore a costume which could be duplicated by the skilful draping of a linen sheet, and the apt twist of a Turkish bath towel. It was straight and long and princely: its whiteness threw into fatal relief the mahogany of the Oriental skin. The audience felt with the lady the little shudder of racial mistrust even while it drew a quicker breath at the startling beauty of the suitor.

Many years ago I was present at the production of a nursery play which well might have been called "*The Exploits of an Apron.*" There were other actors, but through five

acts the apron — the full white apron such as nurses wear over comfortable laps — made its entrances and exits. There was no act in which it did not vary its performance: there was no single scene in which it did not appear. In the first act it was a plain apron, spreading its whiteness over the knees of the nurse of the heroine; no sooner was the curtain up on act two than the apron was discovered suspended round the neck of the hero — a simple valiant butcher boy; the third act, by skilful manipulation, used it for a court train at a ball; in the fourth it was draped about a large doll who interpreted the part of a foundling, and in the last it framed the heroine's sad face, as she droopingly sought the haven of a convent, serving as wimple and as coif at once. And, like many stories of childhood and of children, the memory of that apron seems to me less an anecdote than a parable. It carries much instruction for the costumer.

Elaboration of detail and the expenditure of large sums of money are not indispensable. Out-of-door plays may be staged simply and without much money. It is not necessary to

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have an expensive stage. It may be that the Town Hall was built upon Doric lines, or that some generous inhabitant of your village has a lovely sloping orchard — they will serve the purpose of a setting for beauty. Use what is at hand thoughtfully and with taste: the result will be satisfying.

It cannot be reiterated too often, "Make use of what you have." Look upon everything as possible theatrical material. There will appear many strange new lights upon old objects. This advice is valuable not only in the processes of production, but as well in the choice of a theatre, in the selection of casts, and in the everyday social routine of the theatre. A brief review of the theatres in the Appendix will show the variety of the houses of play which already exist: schoolhouses, stables, the floor of a loft-building, and even a converted barroom are among them. Of the last charming interior a photograph is included, which is, I think, suggestive of much that might be done, with its use of old church pews, and patchwork curtain.

Do not overlook the usefulness of the thing

that is near you. Keep your productions sane and reasonable. Let them be proportionate to the surroundings. Do not try to follow in detail a production of *Henry the Eighth* by Sir Herbert Tree if your stage is set up shakily against the rough timbers of a barn: think rather of strolling players and the simplicity of the Elizabethan theatre. Remember that a production is as much an entity as a symphony is: carefully eliminate contrasts which will bring in discords where there should be harmonies.

But above all it will be the spirit of joy — the joy of creation — and the inspiration of working together which will contribute most to the beauty of the theatre. Do not let that precious attribute escape: it is priceless above emeralds. With joy and with coöperation, it is possible to pass to the uttermost bounds of achievement, and the possession of money matters very little.

## CHAPTER XI

### SUGGESTIONS

To harmonize and to create a balance between the social and the artistic forces in the theatre requires the most delicate manipulation. Labor — the privilege of service — must be so divided that no one is excluded from his just proportion. It may be well to consider in turn the duties of each office in relation to the other cogs in the wheel of production, and in relation to the audience-community.

The *Executive Committee* is to control the general management. It is composed of the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and chairman of the *Membership Committee*. In the earlier days of the theatre, there will be more work for the committee as a whole than when the routine is established, for it must assemble to meet crises, sudden demands of this or that party, to discuss the trials of each

individual officer, and to knit the tangled threads into a smooth and pleasant fabric. At all times its function will be to untie knots of executive policy.

The president is, of course, the chief executive and the presiding officer, and as such must possess qualities of worth in management and in meeting people, tact and quick-wittedness, directness of thought, and speed in action. The president should not be an artist of the theatre, primarily; nor is it, on the other hand, necessary that this officer be a person trained in one of the social sciences, but rather a person of average administrative ability who has been trained carefully in the minor matters, and whose social gift is somewhat unusual. The president should be a person who has no difficulty in obtaining the vote of something over the majority — a good popular candidate. The social gift and the background of training which make the officer familiar with the means of production at his command are the most salient characteristics which he need possess.

Unlike most vice-presidents, the vice-presi-



dent of our theatre is to be a busy and important person. He works behind the scenes however. Let him be chairman of the greenroom committees. This is in reality the position of Chairman of Chairmen, for under him will stand in turn the heads of each individual unit into which the process of production is divided. The vice-president will know what money can be spent in the course of the season upon all the branches of the greenroom work, he will decide how these sums are to be allotted, after consultation with the under-chairmen. He is the representative of the greenroom in the *Executive Committee*.

The secretary has obvious duties, as has, indeed, the treasurer. In large communities they may be given assistants: in small ones the duties of both may be consigned to one person, or combined with those of the chairman of the *Membership Committee*. This last-named official is of vital importance to the newly-established theatre, and should be a perfect fusion of tact, advertising ability, enthusiasm, and intuition! He is the sociological head of the theatre, and in his hands should be placed

the authority to do all that is possible to encourage the growth of the membership list until its compass is the breadth of the community. After that, with the help of an efficient committee, he should keep closely in harmony with all the members, acting as a thermometer and a barometer for the *Executive Committee*, and the producing staff.

Of the appointed officers, the director is most important. In many cases, some one person with appropriate qualifications will stand in evident contrast to the rest of the community. However, when this is not true, the appointee should be skilled in handling material, both theatric and human, and should have a definite knowledge of the tastes and interests of his audience. He should be supported by a committee of interested people, with a decided gift for the details of actual stage work. In the hands of the director's committee will rest the production of plays and the problems of casting, the "coaching" of the actors, and the general artistic oversight of the season.

The minor committees are assembled in

ranks under these staff officers. The *Committee on Costumes* will organize and arrange costumes, keeping those which are made in a suitable order and providing costumes for each play as it comes up for consideration. The *Committee on Make-up* will assume the responsibility for the wigs and the beards, will apply rouge and powder, will become proficient in the difficult manipulation of cosmetic. *Scenery, lights, and properties* — each needs an able corps for its direction.

The committees are appointed for the season; they work together through a series of plays. But at the same time there are temporary committees which coöperate with them, each serving for one production. If there are to be six plays during the season, there are six committees, each turning its attention to one play. A chairman, with two or three assistants, will be sufficient. These temporary executives work in direct connection with the member of the director's committee who is staging the play; they call upon the permanent committees for assistance and for advice.

When the temporary chairmen are chosen

by the *Executive Committee*, the most careful attention should be paid to the advice of the chairman of *Membership*. It will be well in choosing them to take prominent persons from every faction of the community life and to select them with attention to many matters beside a gift for the theatre. This serves an obvious social purpose, the programme will interest one and then another subdivision of the audience as a whole — the season will belong to the entire community.

The choice of plays demands the careful attention not only of a *Play-Reading Committee*, but of every one connected with the enterprise. Some one has wisely said that Broadway needs play readers no longer because even the office boys are reading plays. In the community theatre it will be regrettable if half the audience is not discovering plays for production. While the theatre is a small group, this assistance will be all that the director and his committee require, but when the intricacies of stage direction are multiplied by the augmentation of the theatre's size, the buffer value of the *Play-Reading Committee*

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becomes instantly apparent. By the time the membership has reached, say three hundred, there will be need of a committee, constantly reading, wandering up and down the world in search of new material. They serve as the beaters in an Indian hunt, to rouse the quarry. It is the duty of the director and his committee to act the part of the sportsman whose shot commits them to production.

In the Appendix is a list containing several books which will be of help in planning balanced programmes, or which will offer fields of forage for those who are unaccustomed to play reading. More than that, the Drama League has much to say about courses in reading and the study of the drama. These matters will fall naturally under the direction of the *Play Committee*: courses in the history and technique of the drama will stimulate an interest in the literary value of the theatre. Such a branch of the theatre's work might well be intrusted to the *Play-Reading Committee*.

The difficult task of assigning parts — the casting of plays — falls, in the last analysis, to the director. He is of course open to sugges-

tion. And in several well conducted theatres it has been found that a system of *trials* is more productive of good actors than any other method of filling the parts. At Montclair, where the democratic note is vibrant, the candidates are tried more or less publicly. Mr. Harold Howland writes :

One of the trial evenings of the Players is an attractive occasion. Twenty-five or thirty persons sit round informally — the Producing Committee, the producer of the Play, candidates, members of the General Committee. A makeshift scene is sketched in with random tables and chairs and what not. Two or three at a time the aspiring players read short scenes from the play as directed by the producers. Sometimes the logical players for certain parts are apparent without extended hearing. Sometimes the casting of a single part requires many trials and even the combing of the community for the right material. But the democratic free-for-all method seems to work. Splendid material appears from unexpected and unknown quarters. . . .

The method of trying candidates for each play, although undoubtedly superior to that of casting by guess or by fancy, has several drawbacks. It concentrates competition: there is

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the danger of hard feeling between the winner and the loser. It takes much time: the committees must try *all* comers, and some of them will be those who have "tried" for every part in the history of the theatre. Moreover, very talented persons must be dragged out to go through the routine with every one. It was to offset such economic waste and such friction that during my own direction of an unimportant organization, I instituted *annual* trials. A certain time was set aside for all people who wished to act to appear before the judges: scenes from standard plays which had variety and range were designated: the judges were given pencils and slips of paper. Then in careful order, sets of two or three would-be actors came and played their scenes. The most assiduous notes were made upon each performance: the judges consulted together, and a list was made in which the limitations and possibilities of each performer were set forth for future use. This list was to provide the casts for the season's productions.

The concentration of examining the actors eliminates the need for repeated trials whenever

a new cast is necessary during the busy season ; but it will be well to announce fresh ones to reinforce the first, as new material arises quickly, and the list should be kept vital. This list is the community theatre's Stock Company. From it — however large it may be — the director should choose as many actors as possible during the year. In the ideal community theatre, every one would be given a chance to try everything which he wished to do : in that striving limited human version which we are forced to organize, it is possible to approach the ideal from afar. A girl who has nothing to recommend her to the audience except a desire to play *Ophelia* cannot, obviously, be put into such a part. But she can be studied and slipped into a tiny place somewhere : she can be given the satisfaction of feeling that she has played one part : with proper training she may even come to larger ones. There is a story, much-repeated, that one of the most famous of our musicians was urged, as a girl, to stop singing because she had no voice.

The sketch permitted by this brief space



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can do little but outline possible courses of action. Every facet of the theatrical gem may have unlimited attention. The *Music Committee* advises and provides music: the artists are gathered into a studio group: workshop opportunities are endless. A large theatre may have a library; even the smallest will find a bookshop useful in which to offer for sale plays old and new during the performances. The acting may be regulated by a *Trials Committee*: when the first agony of showing what they can and what they cannot do is over, let such a committee seize the aspiring actors and give them direction in diction, lessons in dancing, or courses in pantomime and interpretation. It is possible to elaborate the edifice endlessly.

The progress of a play through the channels of this complicated machinery would happen somewhat after this fashion. At the commencement of the season, the president would notify some prominent person that he was to have charge of the fifth production. The date of his production assigned, he would be asked to consider and to submit plays. Mean-

time, the director with his committee and the *Play Committee* would also be reading.

A week before the time for rehearsals to begin, the manager would be invited to meet the *Director's Committee*. In this meeting as much consideration as seemed compatible with the general policy of the year would be shown his desires; he would be consulted in matters of the play, the cast, and the selection of artistic advisers. But in the final instance, questions must be decided by the director.

Rehearsal of the play would be put into the hands of the director's assistant, a member of the committee to whom the production came in rotation. He will assume responsibility: he will discuss the play with the director: he will be allowed great freedom in his control, and will be led rather than directed.

The cast will be selected from the acting list. It may be that one part or another cannot be decided: trials for that part will be privately provided to decide it. The cast will assemble, and the play will be read to them. Certain large lines of its form will be suggested. Then they will be expected to study, and at

first the director's assistant will allow them great liberty in working out their own ideas, cutting out only those conceptions which make a blatant disharmony with the whole.

The rehearsing of the play may be done in several ways. Every director has his own methods. But two things are important: the director-in-chief should be the court of last resort, and the director's assistant in charge should be given great freedom. It is unwise to allow promiscuous suggestion from whosoever happens to be present at a rehearsal. All directions should come through the person in command.

As the play progresses, the manager and his committee consult the branches of greenroom direction. Costumes, scenery, and lighting must be thoroughly discussed: experiments must be made. If the closets do not contain the proper material to twist into use, the studio department will be called into play. So it goes. On the day of dress rehearsal, all the departments will be assembled with pencil and with pads, to jot down suggestions for the director.

And when the première, the first night, the production actually arrives, the signal which darkens the auditorium and sets the curtain in slow motion is like a lever which releases a steady, efficient machine. Everywhere each tiny part slips into action. There are members who sit in quiet corners, waiting for a chance to do some inconspicuous service with the same eager keenness that shines on the heroine's delicately rouged face. And across the wholly eradicated line of the footlights, there comes a whisper of sweetness, which is the fragrance of fellowship.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE THEATRICAL RENAISSANCE

THE enthusiast and the sluggard are equally susceptible to the human failing of impatience: the seer of visions, beholding his dream afar off, chafes at the stretch between himself and his accomplishment: the disbeliever cannot look beyond present imperfection.

The community theatre will suffer both from those who believe in it too much and from those who have too little faith in its power. As an ideal it will satisfy: it offers to the community the common interest which is lacking, and to the arts of the theatre it offers a permanent home. The community will have an interest wide enough to include all its members and yet deep enough to hold them all. The theatre arts will find a place to expand and to grow.

But the practical application of the ideals of democracy to the theatre as an institution

means very distinct limitations. The ideal is not that of a connoisseur: it is the joyous ideal of a creator. The art which will be produced by a theatre so governed and so manned with artists will be the tiny acorn of art from which the oak tree will not come except by a process of slow growth.

The working of the community theatre must be attended with faith and with no discouragement. Friction is bound to arise, friction which seems about to prevent the accomplishment even of the most minor ends. But with faith and courage, such friction can be turned into power and made to propel the machine.

It would be madness to expect that because a theatre is established in a community, it would instantly begin to produce art which would rival in beauty and in technique the art which has acquired its richness through generations of tradition. The first struggles of the average community theatre will not compare in ease of expression with the theatre as we know it. They will be fantastic and often grotesque to a trained eye and ear. But if they have a sincere foundation and if they cling to their

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naïveté, there is no limit to be put upon their ultimate achievement.

For this reason, the community theatre carries a promise to the theatre as an art, which is not equalled, I think, by any other possible theatrical ideal. The arts in the theatre are given every opportunity. The new forces of art which the theatre has so recently been feeling, are given a twofold reinforcement. The community theatre spreads news of them to every member of the theatre: it creates an audience which not only understands art, but which comes clamoring for the gifts of art; and it takes away from the theatre the danger — the stultification and oblivion — which hangs over it now upon its present commercial and speculative basis.

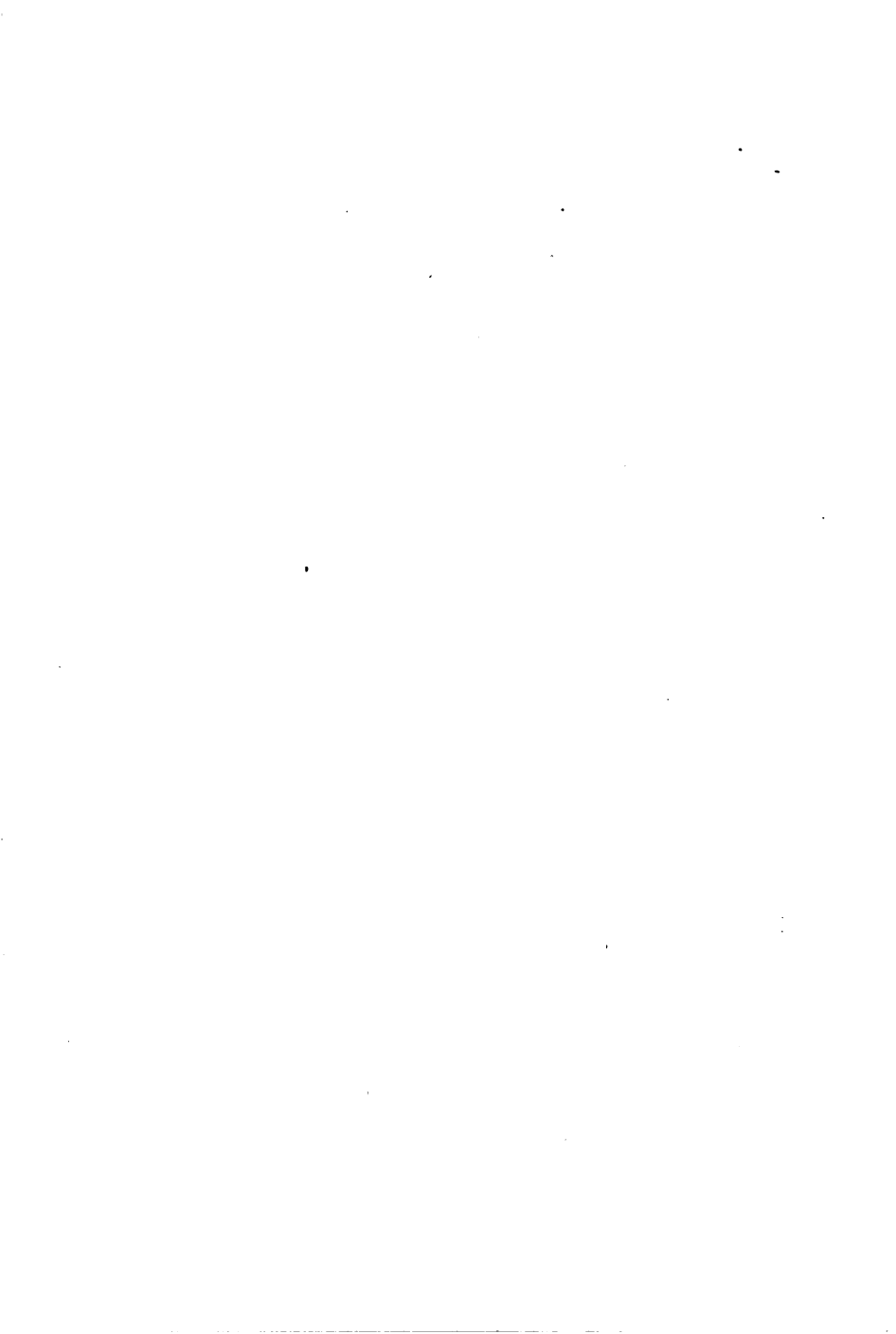
The renaissance of the theatre in our time has long since begun to affect us. The stirring of fresh life is evident in each new theatrical production upon Broadway: it does not neglect the smallest stock house in the country. We are obliged to acknowledge its existence and its vitality; we are glad to recognize that the art is assuming control. And how may we

best help that tremendous achievement to its fullest growth?

In answer to this question I have submitted these outlines for the community theatre, *a house of play in which events offer to every member of a body politic active participation in a common interest.* It is not to be judged as the full-blown flower of art: it is not even a bud about to open. Rather it might be called the soil — fertile and fragrant — in which the seed is to be sown. The infant art of the theatre is to be rocked in this cradle.

And may we not hope that if it has the interest of the community, the growing taste and curiosity of its audience, combined with a group of artists whose lives have been freed from the canker of distrust and the fester of the desire for gain, may we not hope that the theatre of the community will, as it develops new strength, bring new art forms and new vigor into the art of the theatre? This gift would be the final achievement towards which we must labor in the Theatre of Democracy.





## APPENDIX<sup>1</sup>

THE list of theatres which follows will indicate in part the variety and vitality of the new theatrical enthusiasm. It can do little more. At this moment when fresh ventures are being made in untried fields every day, such a list must fall far short of completeness. In the comment there has been no attempt at criticism and no effort to classify either the output or the organization. The notes have been chiefly compiled from the statement of some member of each theatre's staff.

### BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

#### THE VAGABOND PLAYERS

Organized in 1916 by Mrs. Nathan and Mr. Sax to produce new works by American authors and important plays by foreign writers which would not otherwise be seen in Baltimore. The theatre is a converted barroom (see photograph) seating sixty-two people. The organization is supported by sub-

<sup>1</sup> List is alphabetical.

scriptions and gives performances twice a week, presenting three one-act plays a month for five months. These plays are selected by a committee of five members and acted by casts chosen by trial from all interested persons, under the direction of Mrs. Nathan and Mr. Sax. All services are given.

#### BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

##### GREEK THEATRE

An out-of-door theatre which follows Greek lines in its design. Is in close association with the University of California. Professional performances are often given there beside notable productions by the students of the university.

#### BETHEL, MAINE

A converted stable which is at the service of all the community who wish to join in theatrical work. Seats one hundred fifty people and has a comfortable stage. Under the direction of Miss Schornle of Cincinnati, and the patronage of Mr. W. J. Upson.

#### BLUE HILL, MAINE

A private open-air theatrical stage cut out of the rock, with the lovely peak of Blue Hill towering over it.

## BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## TOY THEATRE

A group of amateurs who carried on interesting experiments in production in a tiny theatre made from a stable. When the subscribers grew numerous, an attempt was made to build a larger theatre and move into it, but the theatre is now occupied by a stock company, and the Toy organization no longer exists. Founded 1910. Closed 1915. 4

## BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

## COMMUNITY THEATRE

Organized in 1917 by Henry B. Stillman, for the common use, pleasure, and instruction of the community. A company of professional actors under an experienced director. Aim is to establish a permanent self-supporting repertory company. Supported partly by subscribers.

## CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

## THE 47 WORKSHOP

Founded in 1914 by Professor George Pierce Baker to give a hearing at Harvard University and Radcliffe College to any one who has something interesting to offer in the theatrical arts. Plays are chosen by Mr. Baker with the approval of the Executive Committee,

and cast by them from a company of players who have been tested in former plays reinforced by less experienced actors. The audience consists of people deeply interested in the arts of the theatre, willing to coöperate with the work, at least financially; it is limited to four hundred by the lack of accommodation: new members are proposed and seconded by old ones. The audience is required to send in a written criticism of the performance, from which the names are removed before submitting them to the author and workers. This device proves satisfactory and helpful. The theatre is the inadequate Idler Theatre of Radcliffe College.

#### CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA, CALIFORNIA

##### FOREST THEATRE SOCIETY

First production in 1910 was due to the efforts of literary people in Carmel. The theatre is an outdoor one. The society is supported by its members and assisted by the business men of the town. Membership is unlimited: fee one dollar a year. Under the direction of a council of fifteen members who are elected annually. This council chooses plays, and the director is appointed by them. There are standing committees on Plays, Costumes, Finance, Membership, Programmes, and Publicity. The plays produced are original—unacted—in so far as is possible, and often written by local playwrights.

The production of an annual Children's Play is a feature of the programme.

**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS****THE HULL HOUSE PLAYERS**

The dramatic group of the Hull House Settlement, which came originally, Miss Addams tells us in her history of Hull House, from the inspiration of the Passion Play at Oberammergau. Its audience is made up of the settlement people and of interested outsiders; the company is chiefly of the neighborhood, under the direction of Laura Dainty Pelham. Has produced many interesting sociological plays.

**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS****THE LITTLE THEATRE**

Founded 1909. Has produced every kind of play under the direction of Mr. Maurice Browne. Has lately received an endowment.

**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS****THE PLAYERS WORKSHOP**

An experimental theatre where ideas may be worked out in practice. It gives plays by Chicago writers only, and nothing but first productions.

Each programme is played for six nights in one week. The settings and costumes are designed and made in the studio of the organization.

#### CINCINNATI, OHIO

##### LITTLE PLAYHOUSE COMPANY

Founded by Mrs. Helen Schuster-Martin. Produces unusual plays. Seeks to become a community venture. Company is part professional, on nominal salaries.

#### CONTOOCOOK, NEW HAMPSHIRE

The Putney Hill Improvement Society, organized for the betterment of rural conditions, has a theatrical department. The theatre is a converted disused schoolhouse which holds one hundred twenty-five people. A committee is chosen to manage each production.

#### DETROIT, MICHIGAN

##### ARTS AND CRAFTS THEATRE

Has just finished its first season — an artistic achievement of note, under the direction of Mr. Sam Hume. Subscribers, who are represented in the management by an advisory committee, support it. Its purpose is defined as “entertainment and art” but it seeks to express the spirit of the locality by producing plays written there.

## FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

## LITTLE COUNTRY THEATRE

An organization of amateurs under the leadership of Mr. Alfred Arvold and connected closely with the extension work of the Agricultural College. It gives, among other plays, those of pioneer life which are most suited to the country audiences for which it is organized. The company shifts from one community to another. A department of dramatic literature is also part of the work, and there is a valuable loan dramatic library. The theatre is a remodelled chapel. The effects have spread to South Dakota, Montana and Iowa.

## GALESBURG, ILLINOIS

## LITTLE PRAIRIE PLAYHOUSE

During the past season has produced monthly programmes of long and short plays of a serious nature, among them an original play by the director, Mr. J. A. Crafton.

## INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

## LITTLE THEATRE SOCIETY OF INDIANA

Organized in February, 1915, at the suggestion of Professor William Jenkins. Affiliated with the local Drama League. Has no theatre. Work of an ex-



perimental nature, not always under a professional director. Objects are "the experimental and repertory presentation of both approved and untried dramatic works, and the development of the resources of the community in the creation and interpretation of vital and artistic plays." Membership of three classes by which association is chiefly financed. But performances are open to the public, and the players need not be members of the society. (The coming season may see a limitation of this policy.)

#### LAKE FOREST, ILLINOIS

##### LAKE FOREST PLAYERS

Organized by Mrs. Arthur Aldis for the pleasure of the players and their friends, as an experiment and an adventure. The theatre is a converted wooden house. In its seventh season, which covers the summer months.

#### LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

##### LITTLE THEATRE

Control was assumed in 1916 by Miss Aline Barnsdall and the Players Producing Company. Mr. Richard Ordynski made several productions during the season 1916-1917. The theatre will reopen in 1917-1918 under the Player Producing Company.

## MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN;

## THE LITTLE THEATRE OF MILWAUKEE

Founded in 1912 to provide good dramatic fare for Milwaukee, and in its present policy aims to follow the New Free Folk Stage in Berlin. Theatre seats one hundred fifty. Membership unlimited; dues three dollars a year. Conducts an open-air theatre in summer, and opens its doors to all Children's Players beside giving plays for children. The director-producer is assisted by an advisory board of prominent persons. Plays are acted by amateurs: services are all given. Under the direction of Mrs. Edith Adams Stewart.

## MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

## THE WISCONSIN PLAYERS

Organized as the Wisconsin Dramatic Society and Players with a purpose akin to that of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Two years ago it abandoned its branch in Madison, which had formed an "exchange company" up to that time. Has a theatre, conducts a workshop to encourage experiment in the arts of the theatre. Membership open to all who are interested. Dues include all the activities of the society. Non-members admitted to plays. Originally under the direction of Mr. Thomas Dickinson, now directed by Mrs. Laura Sherry.

**MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY****MONTCLAIR PLAYERS**

Open to the entire community. Dues fifty cents a year: tickets for individual performances sell at twenty-five cents. Players chosen from the community by competition. Direction and production by members. Executive Committee select plays. High School used as theatre. First season has roused great enthusiasm.

**MOUNT TAMALPAIS, CALIFORNIA****THE MOUNTAIN PLAY**

Founded in 1913, since which time there have been annual productions. The original owner, Mr. William Kent, deeded the amphitheatre to the trustees to be held forever for The Mountain Play. Visitors are urged to spend the day upon the Mountain, and thousands take advantage of the invitation every year. The earliest play was acted by students from the University of California.

**NEW YORK CITY****BRAMHALL PLAYERS**

A professional company under the direction of Mr. Butler Davenport, who is the author of some of their plays as well. Opened in 1916.

## NEW YORK CITY

## COMMUNITY CHORUS

Organized by Harry Barnhart, Director, January 6, 1916. Has sung every week since its organization and has invited everybody freely to sing with it. Holds "Sings" in Central Park every Sunday afternoon with from five to ten thousand persons present, besides producing such choruses as Handel's *Messiah* and Haydn's *Creation* with from one to two thousand voices.

*(Not a Theatre, yet important to the Theatre.)*

## NEW YORK CITY

## THE GRAMMERCY PLAYERS

An organization announced to open in 1917-1918, under the direction of Mr. Edwin Hopkins.

## NEW YORK CITY

## GREENWICH VILLAGE THEATRE

Announced.

"No set policy will be adhered to regarding the length of plays presented . . . plays by the more important European dramatists . . . particular attention to the younger American playwrights . . . an occasional classical play revived. A company of professionals who are amateurs in the sense that

they love acting as an art and are willing to forsake the commercial theatre with its long runs and set methods in order to do good work."

(From the Advance Announcement)

Is to include also Sunday evening concerts and will present to the public unusual artists — musicians and dancers — some of a type whose art would be lost in a large concert hall.

Another activity is to be "conferences" — not stereotyped lectures, but talks in which the audience takes part. Besides, it plans to hold art exhibitions so that younger men may be given a chance to exhibit.

#### NEW YORK CITY

##### THE MARIONETTE THEATRE

A fairy tale theatre for children which has its headquarters at Richmond Hill House, 28 Macdougall Street, under the direction of Remo Bufano.

#### NEW YORK CITY

##### MORNINGSIDE PLAYERS

Organized in the season 1916-1917 by Mr. Hatcher Hughes of Columbia University together with several of his pupils. Includes Mr. Clayton Hamilton and Mr. Barrett Clark on its executive force. The membership is not limited to those interested people who are actually connected with the University . . .

any one offering his services as actor, manager, playwright, or producer is eligible. The two productions last season were made in the Comedy Theatre: the organization has no home and no specific audience.

#### NEW YORK CITY

##### NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE

The developed dramatic classes of the Henry Street Settlement beautifully housed in the theatre which was the gift of the Misses Lewisohn. Produces Jewish Festival Plays, short and long plays of every description, and is constantly responsible for the introduction of good professional companies to Grand Street. The artistic staff is an excellent one and the resident actors skilled amateurs. Its work is constantly varied and interesting. The management of the theatre is in the hands of a board of management: the audience is primarily drawn from the neighborhood of the Lower East Side; but all New York wanders in from time to time.

The theatre was built in 1914: before that time productions had been made in a near-by hall.

#### NEW YORK CITY

##### THE PLAYHOUSE

In 1915-1916 Miss Grace George established a repertory company in The Playhouse, producing a

new play every month in the face of the continued success of each new production, which would have enabled a lazy manager to fall into the "long run" habit. The announcement has just been made that the theatre is to be reopened for the season 1917-1918.

#### NEW YORK CITY

##### PORTMANTEAU THEATRE

*(Not in the strict sense a social theatre, since it does not limit itself in any way by direct connection with any audience; it is, however, of vital importance because its ingenuity and its simplicity may lead to the accomplishment of almost any ends.)*

Mr. Stuart Walker's complete theatrical stage, which can go to the ends of the earth at a moment's notice. It requires a room sixteen and one half feet high, twenty feet long, and forty feet wide. The company is a repertory company made up of talented young professional actors who regard acting as an art. The artistic staff is unusually gifted and efficient.

#### NEW YORK CITY

##### PROVINCETOWN PLAYERS

Called "The Playwrights' Theatre." An experimental theatre which began at Provincetown, Massachusetts, when a group of authors interested in

dramatic writing gathered there for two consecutive summers. In the summer of 1915 this group made their first productions. In 1916 they moved into the Wharf Theatre. In the winter of 1916 the first New York productions were undertaken. Tickets are sold only to subscribers, and the membership is so much in demand that many season-subscribers were refused last year. Plays are written and produced by the active members: services are free with the exception of two officers who give all their time to the management.

#### NEW YORK CITY

##### WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS

Originally a group of interested non-professional people who began acting for their own amusement and have progressed to the Bandbox Theatre for a much talked-of season (1915-1916) and have followed it by meeting Broadway upon its own ground in the Comedy Theatre (1916-1917). They have done many interesting and some startling plays.

#### NEW YORK CITY

##### THE THEATRE WORKSHOP

Organized in November, 1916, for the purpose of centralizing the various creative interests of the theatre for their mutual inspiration and for the non-commercial enlargement of their opportunities.



Has among its departments, Playfinding Committee, Associate Players, Production Department, Stars and Directors, and an Extension by which plays may be sent with good casts to schools or towns desiring them. Depends upon subscription for support.

#### NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

##### NORTHAMPTON PLAYERS

A professional company which is somewhat responsible to the town for the success or failure of its productions. Organized in 1910. Under the direction of Mr. Bertram Harrison.

#### ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

##### BLYTHELEA PLAYERS

An amateur organization following the lines of a club, which has a theatre in Llewellyn Park on the estate of Mrs. C. C. Goodrich. The theatre is remodelled from a stable and carriage house, and is furnished with many conveniences such as a dome for lighting and an otherwise adequately equipped stage. Plays are produced for members and their guests, and then are repeated for some charity. The work is all voluntary and is under the direction of Mr. Howard Greenley, the architect of the theatre.

## PETERBOROUGH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

The Edward MacDowell Memorial Society has made a habit, since the year 1911, of producing a Festival upon a beautiful outdoor stage on the MacDowell estate. The colony of artists which assembles there for the summer has given its services, and the village has an excellent choral organization. Mrs. Edward MacDowell is the moving spirit of the group.

## PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

## PITTSBURGH THEATRE ASSOCIATION

In its first season. Hopes to develop into a permanent art theatre. Under the direction of Mr. Thomas H. Dickinson.

## PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

## PITTSFIELD THEATRE

A stock company which is supported by interested townspeople who own stock and control the policy to this extent.

## PLAINFIELD, VERMONT

## VILLAGE THEATRE

The stage of the Town Hall, reconstructed by the coöperative effort of the selectmen and Mr. Howard

Hart, is used for frequent village entertainments and for productions by the summer visitors as well. Has a curtain painted by Mr. Maxfield Parrish.

#### ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

##### THE LITTLE THEATRE

Founded under the auspices of the Drama League. Audience unlimited by membership. Produces one-act plays of every variety with amateur casts drawn from a group of about one hundred members whose services are given. Play-reading committee of three chooses plays. First season.

#### SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

##### LITTLE PLAYHOUSE COMPANY

Productions limited by the stage of the Artist's Guild Theatre. Audience limited to members of society. Has subscription list so large that actors and stage hands have been paid from the first. Policy for next season undetermined, as it is changing directors. Has been under the direction of Doctor Masseck.

#### SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

##### THE LITTLE THEATRE

Incorporated in February, 1917. Composed of one hundred active and forty associate members.

Under the direction of eleven corporate directors. Is the outcome of the production of two plays, and expects during the next season to produce one programme a month, under the direction of a professional coach. Casts are composed of amateurs. There is no theatre as yet, but negotiations have been made to remodel an abandoned church designed by Cass Gilbert.

#### UNIVERSITY, NORTH DAKOTA

##### SOCK AND BUSKIN SOCIETY

##### "LITTLE PLAYHOUSE"

##### "BANKSIDE"

A dramatic laboratory under Mr. Frederick H. Koch of the Department of English. Membership limited to forty and based upon competitive trials. Programmes carefully planned in co-operation with the Department of English. Has two theatres — The Little Playhouse and The Bankside, an outdoor theatre with a stream flowing between stage and audience. Has been doing constructive work for twelve years. Under Mr. Koch's direction has produced two pageants (*Pageants of the Northwest*, 1912, and *Shakespeare the Playmaker*, 1916) which are unique in that they were written by a class of twenty students in collaboration.

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

## DRAMA LEAGUE PLAYERS

Organized 1916-1917. Supported by subscription, but audience not limited to subscribers. Plays chosen by a committee of the Drama League. Willingness to serve the only qualification for membership. Services given. Uses a normal school as a theatre.

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

## SYLVAN THEATRE

An out-of-door stage and auditorium (see photographs) built and to be maintained by the War Department in its administration of the Park system of the District of Columbia. May be used for any performance or play which has the approval of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Plan contains seats for five thousand but only twenty-eight hundred were used at the initial performance: these seats are arranged with no cross aisles, so that the view is unobstructed. The acoustics are said to be good. The United States supports the *stage*, including such details as lighting, policing, and the management of tickets. Other expense falls upon the company giving the production.

## NOTES

The author's information in regard to the theatres in the following cities is limited to hearsay accounts of their existence, as letters directed to their managements have unfortunately failed to elicit response,—

Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Cleveland, Ohio.

Evanston, Illinois.

Louisville, Kentucky.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## CALIBAN

Since these chapters went to press there has been a new production of a remodelled *Caliban* in the Harvard Stadium. Naturally great strides have been made in the technique of the new art of which *Caliban* is the exponent. In the perfect circle made by stage and audience, practically all the text was heard. The mechanical device was elaborated, a steam curtain which hid the inner stage added materially to the sense of illusion, and such old theatrical tricks as the trapdoor were employed with the most telling results. But the community spirit was once more of most importance. Behind the scenes it was vividly alive, just as it had been in New York a year ago: "out front" it seemed more vital. It may be that the recent declaration of war, and the

fresh passages in the play which seemed to touch that declaration, had put the spectators in a receptive mood. At any rate, the *Community Drama* (for Mr. MacKaye has avoided the critics by changing the name of his erstwhile masque) rolled up fresh enthusiasm with each passing day until performances long exceeded the advertized number. If some force in the community had been at work for months before the rehearsals organizing and advancing this very enthusiasm, the giant task to which Miss MacKaye, Mr. MacKaye, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Brown bent themselves (with the help of thousands) would have been much simpler. As it is, *Caliban* was so filled with beauty and the promise of beauty that we may well say, with the pale-faced shopgirl who followed me down the Stadium steps, in the face of war and in the face of sacrifice, "Ain't it wonderful to be livin' now?"

#### OBERAMMERGAU

The war has swept through Oberammergau. Miss Madeline Doty tells in an article in a recent *Atlantic* of how she found privation and unhappiness in the village when she visited it some months ago. And now Anton Lang, the *Christus* loved of thousands, of the delicate body and spiritual face, must experience the reality of Golgotha: the drink of vinegar and gall is set to his lips: he is to descend into actual service in the German army. How many times, I

wonder, has he prayed before the altar in the mountain Church, murmuring in words familiar the petition that the cup might pass from him? The crucifixion which he has suffered in spirit has come to him, and with him, to all his neighbors. We cannot be amazed that the Oberammergauers are broken-hearted and that in their discouragement they despair of mending their exquisite fabric. But whatever ancient traditions of beauty may be snapped by the war, surely, when it is over, Oberammergau will return to its greatest joy. And because the spirit of the Passion Play has spread across the sea to us, because we are beginning to realize the strength of Community Drama, it may fall to us as a duty to help restore the actuality to that little village.

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